

**A CRITICAL GEOGRAPHY OF THE  
HOMELAND SECURITY ADVISORY SYSTEM  
(2002-2011)**

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PhD thesis, 2013

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## **Declaration**

I, Philip Kirby, hereby declare that this thesis and the work presented in it is entirely my own. Where I have consulted the work of others, this is always clearly stated.

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Word count: 85, 735

## **Publications arising from this research**

Dodds, K., & Kirby, P. (2013). It's not a laughing matter: Critical geopolitics, humour and unlaughter. *Geopolitics*, 18(1), 45-59

Kirby, P. (2013). The end of the rainbow? Terrorism and the future of public warning. *The RUSI Journal*, 158(4), 54-60

## **Abstract**

This research offers a critical geography of the terrorist warning system developed in the United States after the attacks of September 11, 2001, the Homeland Security Advisory System (HSAS). The HSAS was implemented by the Office (later Department) of Homeland Security, with five colour-coded threat levels that fluctuated according to the threat from terrorism that the United States was deemed to be facing. In particular, the research looks at how the System precipitated certain practices, geographically differentiated; lent itself to satirical readings by commentators such as Jon Stewart; and affected, or did not affect, electoral support for President George W. Bush. The thesis follows a narrative arc in the style of a traditional, yet critical biography, providing an overview of the HSAS and its civil defence lineage, cross-referenced with more thematic considerations, and ending with an analysis of how the HSAS was ultimately dissolved. It is the thesis' suggestion that the ways that the HSAS operated and informed were distinctly geopolitical, and that it can be used to reflect upon recent theoretical engagements with the 'war on terror' and homeland security to demonstrate how some of these might be productively nuanced.

## Contents

Abstract .....	2
Acknowledgments .....	5
Acronyms .....	6
List of figures .....	7
1. THE HOMELAND SECURITY ADVISORY SYSTEM: AN INTRODUCTION .....	8
1.1 The Homeland Security Advisory System and the structure of this thesis .....	8
2. WRITING HOMELAND SECURITY .....	15
2.1 The ‘everywhere war’? Geographical specificity and the HSAS .....	15
2.2 Securitisation, visual culture and non-representational theories .....	22
2.3 Affect and the conception of ‘governments’ and ‘populations’ .....	28
2.4 Popular geopolitics and resistance to federal metanarratives .....	34
3. HOMING IN ON HOMELAND SECURITY .....	41
3.1 Seeking a balanced approach to the ‘US’ and its security policies .....	41
3.2 ‘Peopling’ the HSAS story: geopolitics, interviews and elites .....	47
3.3 An Englishman in Washington: reflections upon positionality .....	54
3.4 The geopolitics of the broken link: a critique of online archives .....	61
4. ‘SIR, WE WILL DEVELOP A PUBLIC WARNING SYSTEM’ .....	69
4.1 Paul Revere, civil defence and the tenets of risk communication .....	69
4.2 The advent of homeland security and the creation of the DHS .....	76
4.3 John Fenzel, Mike Byrne and the geopolitics of colour .....	83
4.4 Tom Ridge, body language and the introduction of the HSAS .....	89
5. FEDERAL, STATE AND LOCAL GOVERNANCE .....	97
5.1 The first five alerts (2002-2004) and the slippage of security logics .....	97

5.2 Material culture, objects and the communication of the HSAS.....	103
5.3 Effects, costs and the response of state and local officials .....	110
5.4 Official reviews, specific alerts (2004-2006) and Michael Chertoff .....	117
6. 'EXTRAORDINARY RIDICULE' .....	125
6.1 Jon Stewart, late-night comedy and humour after 9/11.....	125
6.2 Tom Ridge's negotiation of humour and the HSAS in cyberspace.....	131
6.3 Gender, race and the body: beyond the image .....	139
6.4 Books, television, film and the HSAS as a popular icon .....	145
7. A POLITICAL SPECTRUM? .....	154
7.1 Contextualising political affectivity in US domestic security.....	154
7.2 Tom Ridge's memoirs, the 2004 election and the reaction of senior officials .....	161
7.3 Other political effects and the fractures of homeland security governance .....	167
7.4 The diversity of populations and the affectivity of the HSAS .....	173
8. THE END OF THE RAINBOW.....	181
8.1 The Homeland Security Advisory Council and the creation of 'political space' .....	181
8.2 The National Terrorism Advisory System and Janet Napolitano .....	187
8.3 The foreign and domestic legacies of the HSAS .....	194
8.4 The HSAS and the microgeographies of homeland security .....	201
9. APPENDIX.....	210
9.1 Timeline of the HSAS .....	210
9.2 Profiles of interviewees .....	215
9.3 Coverage of the HSAS by Fox News and <i>The New York Times</i> .....	221
9.4 Transcripts of recorded interviews.....	222
10. BIBLIOGRAPHY.....	290

## **Acknowledgments**

Thanks to Pete Adey, Benigno Aguirre, Kasim Ali, Randy Beardsworth, Andreas Behnke, Scott Behunin, Medea Benjamin, John Brigham, Jonah Brucker-Cohen, Mike Byrne, Jo Cagney, Duncan Campbell, Alan Capps, James Carafano, Kiki Caruson, Rich Cooper, Phil Crang, Clark Ervin, John Fenzel, Stephen Flynn, Amy Franceschini, Ze Frank, David Gilbert, David Karave, William Jenkins, Innes Keighren, Jimmy Klausen, Brittney Kleinfelter, Morton Kondracke, Jenny Kynaston, David Lambert, Alicia Lee, Dave Lippman, Adrian Lopez, Ken Lopez, James Loy, Lori Marshall, Alli McCracken, Terri Moreau, Joan Mower, Richard Mower, Jared Nagel, Gearoid Ó Tuathail, Guy Oakes, John Paul, Charles Peña, Dan Piraro, William Raisch, Shawn Reese, Mary Lou Reker, Michael Salmons, Jordan Schiller, Debra Sebastian, Carol Shields, Meredith Skowronski, Charli Sowers, Frank Swain, Craig Thomson-Smith, Linden Tibbets, Tenzin Tselha, Leonhardt van Efferink, Dan Webb, Janet Weil, Michael Wermuth, Robb Willer, Tony Wolfington and Gordon Woo, as well as my friends and family, the Department of Geography at Royal Holloway, and the John W. Kluge Center at the Library of Congress. All of the above have helped me in constructing this thesis, especially my interviewees and the administrators and secretaries that assisted in arranging interviews with them.

Special thanks to the Economic and Social Research Council, who generously funded both my MA and PhD; the Arts and Humanities Research Council/ Economic and Social Research Council, for giving me the opportunity to study at the Library of Congress during the spring of 2012; Janet Weil, for providing continuing support throughout the process; my two examiners, Sean Carter and Jason Dittmer, for their helpful and supportive comments; and my supervisors, Klaus Dodds and Alasdair Pinkerton, for their unwavering help and guidance across many years. Klaus also advised me during my BA and MA, and has never been less than the perfect mentor. Naturally, any mistakes that remain, despite the assistance of everyone above, are my own.

This thesis is dedicated to my parents, Marion and Ian, for all their kindness.

## Acronyms

ABC	American Broadcasting Corporation
BBC	British Broadcasting Corporation
CIA	Central Intelligence Agency
CNN	Cable News Network
CRS	Congressional Research Service
C-SPAN	Cable-Satellite Public Affairs Network
DEFCON	Defense Condition
DHS	Department of Homeland Security
DOD	Department of Defense
EMERGCON	Emergency Condition
FBI	Federal Bureau of Investigation
FCDA	Federal Civil Defense Administration
FEMA	Federal Emergency Management Agency
FPCON	Force Protection Condition
GAO	Government Accountability Office
GOP	Grand Old Party (Republican Party)
GPO	Government Printing Office
HSAC	Homeland Security Advisory Council
HSAS	Homeland Security Advisory System
HSC	Homeland Security Council
HSOC	Homeland Security Operations Center
HSPD	Homeland Security Presidential Directive
MARSEC	Maritime Security
MI-5	Military Intelligence-Five
MSNBC	Microsoft National Broadcasting Company
NCTC	National Counterterrorism Center
NSA	National Security Agency
NTAS	National Terrorism Advisory System
OHS	Office of Homeland Security
PNAC	Project for a New American Century
PPW	Partnership for Public Warning
REDCON	Readiness Condition
TOPOFF	Top Officials
TSA	Transportation Security Administration
TTIC	Terrorist Threat Integration Center
WATCHCON	Watch Condition

## List of figures

1: The Homeland Security Advisory System.....	9
2: The HSAS' nationwide alerts .....	10
3: The HSAS' specific alerts .....	10
4: George W. Bush and John Fenzel.....	50
5: Map of Washington, DC.....	53
6: The headquarters of Ridge Global .....	60
7: An example of a DHS broken link.....	64
8: The Smokey Bear system.....	71
9: The Bell and Lights system .....	72
10: Tom Ridge is introduced to Congress .....	78
11: The Eisenhower Executive Office Building .....	79
12: Constitution Hall in Washington, DC .....	90
13: Tom Ridge introduces the HSAS.....	91
14: An HSAS in-screen graphic on Fox News .....	105
15: The HSAS iPad application .....	106
16: An Emedco HSAS poster.....	108
17: Raleigh-Durham airport, North Carolina.....	109
18: Code Orange vehicle inspections .....	111
19: Corporate responses to DHS threat levels .....	114
20: Patrick Hughes testifies on the HSAS .....	120
21: Jon Stewart .....	126
22: Code Red, Code Red .....	133
23: Kermit and the rainbow.....	135
24: Japanese HSAS.....	136
25: 'We might have to disrupt the democratic process' .....	137
26: 'Pinking up'.....	142
27: Public Notice 3 .....	143
28: Greg and Terry.....	147
29: The Smith's HSAS fridge magnet .....	148
30: MARSEC in <i>The Ghost</i> .....	149
31: A terror alert in <i>The Manchurian Candidate</i> .....	150
32: The opening of <i>Civic Duty</i> .....	151
33: Willer's paper in <i>The Washington Post</i> .....	157
34: <i>Countdown with Keith Olbermann</i> .....	160
35: The cover page of Tom Ridge's memoirs .....	162
36: A terror alert ticker on Fox News .....	177
37: TV coverage of HSAS alerts .....	178
38: Janet Napolitano introduces the NTAS.....	190
39: The National Terrorism Advisory System .....	191
40: MARSEC at the Whitehall ferry terminal, Manhattan .....	194
41: CARA classification system .....	195
42: The UK threat level system.....	198

# **1. The Homeland Security Advisory System:**

## **An introduction**

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The ‘war on terror’ has been one of the defining conflicts of the 21<sup>st</sup> century so far, initiated by al Qaeda’s attacks on New York and Washington, DC, on September 11, 2001.<sup>1</sup> In response, the United States’ 43<sup>rd</sup> president, George W. Bush, led a ‘coalition-of-the-willing’, principally the United States and Britain, into Afghanistan: the Taliban-ruled failed-state, which had provided support to al Qaeda. Later, these same countries led an invasion of Saddam Hussein’s Iraq. They deposed the dictator, but at great cost: Afghanistan and Iraq have been the two major theatres of a war that has killed up to 250,000 people, mainly civilians (Burke, 2011). The conflict has also had a profound effect on the United States albeit far less lethal. In the aftermath of 9/11, whilst American troops were being mobilised abroad, the nation’s domestic security apparatus was over-hauled and the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) was formed; the third largest department in the country after the Departments of Defense and Veterans Affairs. Its mission: to protect Americans from future terrorist attacks and to avoid a repeat of that day in September. Controversial from the outset, the DHS has been allocated huge amounts of federal funds (Clarke, 2008), but has also been condemned by the media, politicians and other commentators for its perceived degradation of human rights and advocacy of a super-security state (Kirby, 2013).

### **1.1 The Homeland Security Advisory System and the structure of this thesis**

In the immediate aftermath of 9/11 and prior to the creation of the DHS, President Bush created the Office of Homeland Security (OHS), which was first mentioned on September 20, 2001, in the President’s special address to a joint session of Congress (Bush, 2001). Its mission was to coordinate the response of the United States to those attacks and minimise the possibility of further attacks in the future (Bush, 2001). It was headed by the former Governor of Pennsylvania, Tom Ridge, who had been a friend of the President’s for some time (Bush, 2001). One of Ridge’s and the Office’s first policies, introduced on March 12, 2002, was the Homeland Security Advisory System (HSAS) (Ridge, 2002a; 2002b). Most commonly pronounced ‘aitch-sass’ (in

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<sup>1</sup> The conflict has causes that can be traced deep into the historical record, but here ‘war on terror’ indicates the period from 9/11 onward. The term is problematic, as this thesis will explain, but is referred to without inverted commas from here onward for simplicity.



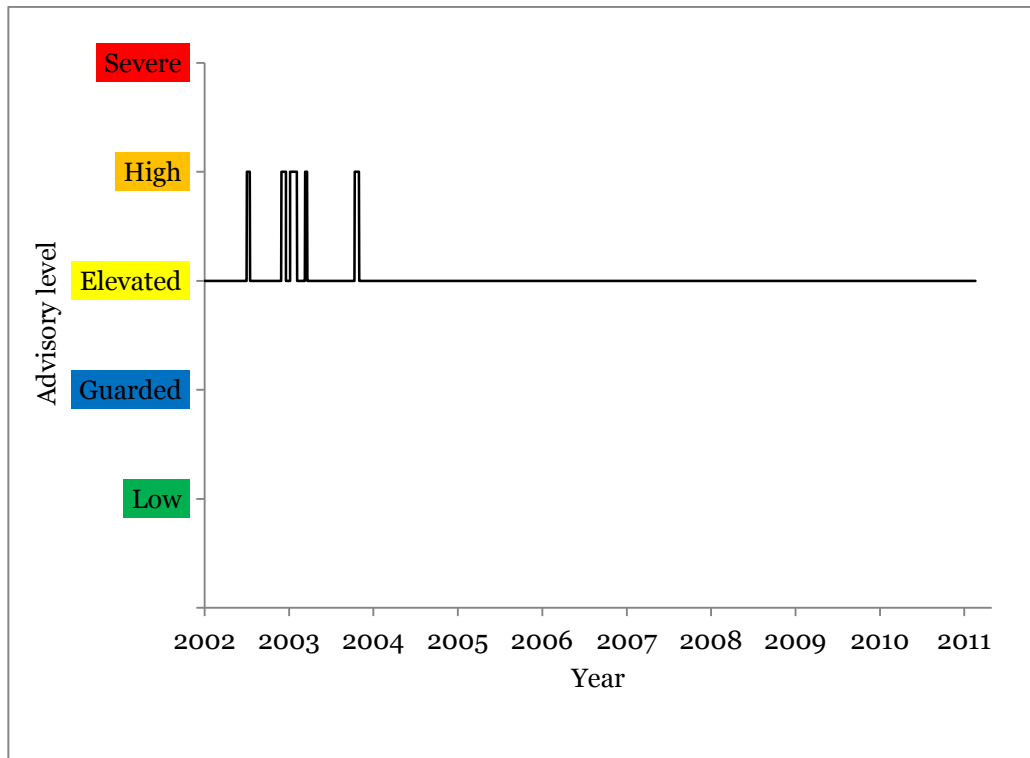
the International Phonetic Alphabet, /eɪtʃ/ /sæs/), the most famous aspect of the HSAS, which often became a synonym for the System itself (Shapiro and Cohen, 2007), was its colour-coded portion.<sup>2</sup> This consisted of five colour-coded rectangles, stacked laterally one-upon-the-other. From top to bottom, the colours were: red (labelled ‘severe risk’), orange (‘high’), yellow (‘elevated’), blue (‘guarded’) and green (‘low’) (Figure 1). During its lifetime the HSAS never went below Code Yellow (which was its default), reached Code Orange eight times and Code Red just once. Six of its alert changes occurred during Ridge’s tenure in charge of the OHS and DHS, from 2002 to 2005, and two during that of his successor, Michael Chertoff, from 2005 until the end of President Bush’s second administration. Of these, the first five were issued for the entire nation and the last three for specific geographical areas and sectors (Figures 2 and 3). After the HSAS’ last alteration in 2006, the System was unofficially retired and in 2011 it was dissolved by the new presidential administration of Barack Obama.



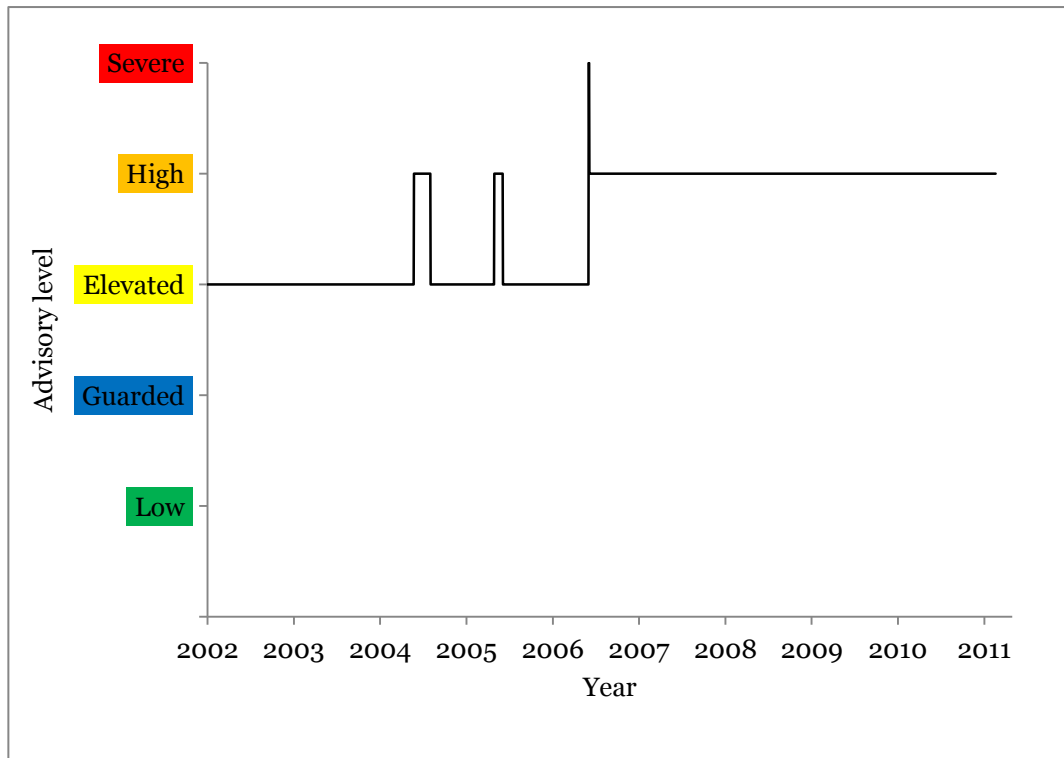
**Figure 1: The Homeland Security Advisory System (DHS, 2002)**

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<sup>2</sup> Although ‘HSAS’ technically refers to the entire System operating across several registers – including intelligence processing, communication and guidelines – and not just its colour-coded portion, it is impractical to constantly differentiate between these two in this thesis. It should be clear from the context of its invocation whether the colour-coded portion or the entire System is being referenced. Throughout, two terms are used to refer to the HSAS: either this acronym, or ‘System’; the latter always capitalised.



**Figure 2: The HSAS' nationwide alerts (DHS, 2009c)**



**Figure 3: The HSAS' specific alerts (DHS, 2009c)**

The initial development of the HSAS began in late 2001 and was led by a White House Fellow, John Fenzel, with the assistance of a former New York firefighter, Mike Byrne (Fenzel, 2011, interview; Byrne, 2012, interview).<sup>3</sup> Drawing upon a history of warning systems in America that stretched back as far as the Cold War, and after a series of discussions between these two DHS officials and others, the design was finalised in March, 2002 (Fenzel, 2011, interview). Signed into law by President Bush with Homeland Security Presidential Directive (HSPD) Three (2002) in the same month, most of its functions initially came under the authority of the Office (later Department) of Homeland Security, except the responsibility for altering the alert level. At first, jurisdiction for this fell to the Attorney General, John Ashcroft (HSPD-3), before being transferred to Secretary Ridge later with the Homeland Security Act (2002). Thus, the first alert was technically issued by the Attorney General and only alerts subsequent to this by the Secretary of Homeland Security. Secretary Ridge introduced the System to assembled media on March 12, 2002, at Constitution Hall in Washington, DC (Ridge, 2002b), in a performance that, as we shall see, allows for reflection upon the embodied practices of statecraft by government officials (Dodds, 2010a). This period, the genesis of the HSAS and its development, is the subject of Chapter 4 of this thesis; the first empirical chapter.

From the start, the System was given mixed reviews by the public, media, and state and local authorities, amongst others (Reese, 2003). At the same time, however, it was a serious policy of public safety and was treated as such by many of these actors. State and local governments across America introduced a host of costly security measures to be enacted when it was elevated, most often from Code Yellow to Code Orange. These included increased police patrols, greater security measures at certain sites, and mandatory vehicle inspections (Jenkins and Sebastian, 2004a). Over time, however, as warnings failed to be followed by actual attacks and the financial costs to state and local budgets mounted, many began to ignore the federal government even when the HSAS level was increased. As a response to these concerns, government oversight bodies – the CRS and the GAO – reviewed the HSAS from 2003 to 2004 (Jenkins and Sebastian, 2004a; Reese, 2003). They recommended that alerts be more geographically specific, and after this they were. The first five alerts had taken a nationwide approach, but after these reviews all alerts would be either economic sector or location specific. This aspect of the System – its enactment by federal, state and local governments and subsequent evolution – is the subject of Chapter 5.

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<sup>3</sup> The White House Fellows is a paid programme that was founded by President Lyndon B. Johnson in 1965, “to provide gifted and highly motivated young Americans with some first-hand experience in the process of governing the Nation” (White House, 2013).

Whilst the HSAS had been undergoing these official processes, it had been subject to the attentions of late-night comedy shows, such as that of Jon Stewart (Stewart and O’Neil, 2002), too. If one way of approaching the HSAS is through its official presence, another is through its reception within popular media. In time, even serious popular outlets, such as *The New York Times*, accompanied almost all of their references to the HSAS with the adjective “ridiculed”, or some variation upon this term, and increasingly treated the HSAS critically and satirically (Appendix 9.3). Later, the Internet became a key site for the humorous denunciation of the System as satirical versions of the HSAS – easy to create because of the original’s basic aesthetic – proliferated across cyberspace. At the same time, the HSAS also found its way into other popular mediums, including the protests of the women-led anti-war group, Code Pink – whose very name was inspired by the System (Weil, 2011, interview) – and art installations by San Francisco-based artists such as Amy Franceschini (Future Farmers, 2002), amongst others. Whilst often playful on the surface, these artistic and popular interventions frequently revealed more critical and thorough engagements with the war on terror. A detailed analysis of these, along with their ability or otherwise to enact political change in the context of the HSAS, is the purpose of Chapter 6.

In 2004, a third major way through which the HSAS has been characterised emerged. This considered the HSAS to be neither a genuine policy of public safety nor a joke, but rather a tool for electoral manipulation. A PhD student from Cornell University, Robb Willer (2004), published an academic paper that suggested that there existed a correlation between changes in the HSAS level – specifically from Code Yellow to Code Orange for its first four alerts – and an increase in electoral support for President Bush. The paper’s implicit suggestion was that President Bush or persons within his administration may thus have manipulated the System for political gain, and this seemed to touch a nerve within many. Willer’s findings were given widespread coverage in the American media and beyond; appearing in over 100 newspaper articles (Willer, 2012, interview). The accusations appeared to die down after Bush’s re-election in November, 2004, but re-emerged in 2009 with the publication of Secretary Ridge’s memoirs. Endorsing Willer’s findings specifically, Ridge (2009) suggested that there had been pressure from some within the Bush administration to issue a Code Orange without the intelligence to justify such a change. The charges were vociferously denied by the officials named by Ridge (Atlantic, 2009), but as a credible policy this was perhaps the last straw for the HSAS. An appraisal of these accusations, and the ways that it may have led certain people to increase their support for President Bush, is undertaken in Chapter 7.

In the same year that Tom Ridge released his memoirs, the HSAS was slated for review by the incoming presidential administration of Barack Obama; specifically, by Obama's first Secretary of Homeland Security, Janet Napolitano (HSAC, 2009a). The process of its dissolution was not clear-cut and required significant politicking by the new Secretary, but by 2011 the System was gone. Today, only echoes of the HSAS remain, including other warning systems that it inspired, both in the US and beyond. These include new or revamped systems instituted in France, Russia and the UK, amongst others. Its most obvious legacy domestically, though, is the National Terrorism Advisory System (NTAS), with which Napolitano directly replaced the HSAS in 2011 and that ostensibly fulfils the same function as its predecessor (DHS, 2011a). The NTAS, however, has stripped out many of the elements that made the HSAS so notable; reducing its levels from five to two and removing its colours completely (DHS, 2011a). Moreover, Secretary Napolitano is yet to use the NTAS, despite the recent Boston Marathon attacks. Almost certainly, this is because of the controversy and ridicule that marked its predecessor (Kirby, 2013). Despite this, Republicans have recently shown a willingness to politicise the new system, too (Morgan, 2011); demonstrating both the linearity and circularity of this aspect of homeland security history. The dissolution and replacement of the System, as well as it echoes at home and abroad, are the subjects of Chapter 8, which finishes with a set of overall thesis conclusions.

This is an overview of the empirical chapters of this thesis which, as mentioned, are ordered chronologically as far as possible, intercut with thematic considerations. In order and aggregate, they consider the genesis and creation of the HSAS (Chapter 4); the ways in which it was practiced at the federal, state and local levels of US governance (Chapter 5); the reception of the System within popular media, which was most often associated with satirical derision (Chapter 6); accusations that the HSAS was manipulated for political gain by the Bush administration, as well as some of the ways that this might have occurred (Chapter 7); and the System's ultimate cessation and replacement, as well as the legacies that remain and what we might conclude from this about the HSAS story (Chapter 8). Prior to this, though, and in order to contextualise the HSAS' story and further elaborate upon the theoretical and methodological approaches of this thesis, Chapters 2 and 3 discuss the literatures through which this thesis can be situated and some of the particular challenges of researching homeland security. In particular, they reflect upon the metageographies that have often been used to understand the war on terror, homeland security and the HSAS, and attempt to offer some ways that such partial accounts might be refined through more 'peopled' accounts of the same (Kuus, 2007).

In Chapter 3, which discusses the research process for this work, this thesis attempts to move away from conceptions of homeland security officials and members of the Bush administration that construe them as nothing more than “a cabal of restless nationalists” (Ó Tuathail, 2003: 857), or suggest that during the Bush-era, “for the first time in history of the modern world-system, the largest economy [the United States’] is controlled by warriors.” (Taylor, 2004: 491). It is the suggestion of this chapter that these kinds of metageographies are unhelpful. Much of this is, the thesis suggests, a question of geographical orientation. Referring to the discursive tactics of the Bush administration, for example, Ó Tuathail (2003: 859) argues that, “9/11 is the somatic pivot of geopolitics in contemporary America, a memory that necessitates and justifies a radical “down-scaling” of the world into infantile categories and identities”. In other words, US government officials reduce other places and peoples to simple categories and are wrong to do so. Ironically, though, it is such ‘radical “down-scaling”’ that is used by the same author to portray the Bush administration and its various officials as a ‘restless cabal’; when, in actual fact, this ‘group’ was at least partially marked by intra-group conflict and disagreement, as will be discussed. As a rejoinder, this thesis follows the work Merje Kuus (2007, 2008, 2013) and seeks to offer a more populated account of geopolitical practice by officials and elites; not necessarily because it agrees with their policies, but because without doing so analysis rehearses, in many ways, “infantile categories and identities”.

This critique of metageographies is foregrounded in Chapter 2, the next chapter, which addresses some of the literatures that have tackled the war on terror, homeland security and the HSAS. Using the work of Derek Gregory (2011), Matt Hannah (2006), Matt Farish (2008), Lauren Martin and Stephanie Simon (2008), Louise Amoore (2006, 2007, 2009a, 2009b), and Brian Massumi (2005), amongst others, it seeks to show how these authors’ elegant theories often break down, or might be productively nuanced, when actual case studies of the war on terror and homeland security, such as the HSAS, are considered. Throughout, the intent is not to denigrate these authors or their useful work, but to use their interventions as stepping stones to refine conceptions of homeland security and the HSAS. Whilst Chapter 2 embraces certain aspects of recent non-representational theories within human geography, it suggests that perhaps non-representational accounts of the world, often predicated upon theoretical rather than empirical claims, might be productively furthered by empirical study. In 2010, Anderson and Harrison (2010: 3) spoke positively of the fact that non-representational theory, “promoted an academic climate wherein so called ‘theoretical’ interventions could be valued as highly as more ‘empirical’ studies.” This thesis disagrees and suggests that empirical research often shows the slippages and omissions of theories pertaining to homeland security.

## **2. Writing homeland security:**

### **The HSAS, the war on terror and metageographies**

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The story of the HSAS is one of multiple components, including practices and procedures; affects and emotions; representations and images; material cultures and political debate. For analytical clarity, as the introduction has described, five key areas have been selected that provide a cross-section of the ways that the HSAS was practiced, represented and thought about, which consider the System's design and creation; official implementation and evolution; critique by satirical actors; putative manipulation for electoral gain; and dissolution and diffusion. In keeping with this thesis' wider aim, these aspects of the HSAS are also used to nuance some of the metageographies and metanarratives that have been used to analyse homeland security and the war on terror. In considering the System's creation and alleged manipulation, for example, it is possible to refine conceptions, common with regard to homeland security and the DHS, that governments and government agencies are singular entities that act as one (Martin and Simon, 2008; Massumi, 2005); in considering the System's satirical denunciation, it is possible to highlight the ways that these official practices and directives, metageographies themselves, were contested and challenged (Brigham, 2005); and in considering the System's official history and increasing geographical specificity, it is possible to nuance the recent suggestion that the war on terror is an 'everywhere war' (Gregory, 2011).

#### **2.1 The 'everywhere war'? Geographical specificity and the HSAS**

In 1997, Martin Lewis and Karen Wigen published their book, *The myth of continents: a critique of metageography*, from which this chapter derives its title. Concerned particularly with how the notion and delimitation of continents had emerged historically, they noted that, "Every global consideration of human affairs deploys a metageography, whether acknowledged or not." (Lewis and Wigen, 1997: ix). For them, a 'metageography' was defined as, "the set of spatial structures through which people order their knowledge of the world: the often unconscious frameworks that organize the studies of history, sociology, anthropology, economics, political science, or even natural history", and was deployed by political actors, especially, "in formulating global constructs for the public imagination" (Lewis and Wigen, 1997: ix). Using this "totalizing spatial framework", such actors could reduce the complexity and messiness of the world into simpler, more easily communicable forms, which

adhered to the particular worldview that they were attempting to promote (Lewis and Wigen, 1997: 11).

In the aftermath of 9/11, the Bush administration partially used such an approach to situate those attacks and the war on terror within pre-existing conceptual frameworks (Masco, 2004). Historical and geographical comparisons were frequently employed (Crawford, 2000), especially to World War Two and the Cold War (Luke, 2009; Silberstein, 2004). Thus, in addition to the use of terms like ‘Ground Zero’, denoting both the points at which the Hiroshima and Nagasaki bombs detonated and the ruins of the World Trade Center (Dalby, 2003; Jackson, 2005), Bush channelled President Roosevelt’s famous denunciation of the WWII axis powers as “Powerful and resourceful gangsters” (Roosevelt, 1941), when he suggested that, “Al Qaeda is to terror what the mafia is to crime.” (Bush, 2001). Elsewhere, Bush prefaced his thoughts upon Islamist terrorism by stating that, “The great struggles of the twentieth century between liberty and totalitarianism ended with a decisive victory for the forces of freedom” (NSS, 2002). And in 2006, he made explicit reference to the latter, contending that, “today’s war on terror is like the Cold War. It is an ideological struggle with an enemy that despises freedom” (Bush, 2006). For their part, homeland security officials embraced such analogies, too, with both Ridge (2002b) and Loy (2004) referencing earlier wars with respect to the homeland security effort: “our parents had World War II and Korea – now, we have the global war on terrorism.” (Loy, 2004: 1).<sup>4</sup>

Such associations had both political benefits for the President and particular geographical associations. They validated the suggestion that this was a war at all, despite the attacks having been perpetrated by a terrorist group rather than nation state (Elden, 2007), and allowed Bush to invoke Article II of the Constitution, proscribing broad powers for him as Commander-in-Chief (Darts et al., 2008). They also situated the 9/11 attacks within a historical narrative of previous successful conflicts, implying that America and its incumbent administration would triumph again. The connection with World War Two, especially, may have been designed to lend moral legitimacy to the war on terror, given the former’s discursive role as, “a frame of reference for good or just wars” (Crampton and Power, 2005: 1), and also stressed the universality of this new conflict. For its successful prosecution, the US might need to strike militarily anywhere on the ‘global battlefield’: whenever and wherever appropriate (Dalby, 2008a; Elden, 2007). In some ways, then, this was a

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<sup>4</sup> This is not to say that elsewhere officials did not also cite the differences between, for example, the Cold War and the war on terror (Loy, 2004), but that even these comments helped to situate the latter within a deeper history by their very nature.



new ‘world’ war for the Bush administration, and an even more ‘totalizing spatial framework’ than the Second World War because the American mainland itself had proven vulnerable to attack. It was both a way for Bush and other political officials to represent the new geopolitical status quo as they saw it, and a series of loaded metageographies that could be used to justify the imminent war on terror.

As Lewis and Wigen (1997: xiii) continue, though, “Diplomats, politicians, and military strategists employ a metageographical framework no less than do scholars and journalists.” Here, I reflect upon Derek Gregory’s (2011) recent intervention, ‘The everywhere war’, in which he appraises the war on terror ten years after the events of 9/11. Despite Gregory’s denunciation of the war on terror in this contribution, by explaining this conflict through the notion that it is ‘everywhere’, a similar metageography is employed to that of Bush, I suggest – even if the intention is to be critical – in which there is a danger of overlooking geographical specificities. To elaborate upon this, this section pivots between the ‘everywhere war’ hypothesis in Gregory’s iteration and that of others concerned specifically with the HSAS, and several literatures on the HSAS that demonstrated how the System, rather than applying ‘everywhere’, evolved over time to become more geographically specific. In particular, it introduces some of the themes discussed further in Chapter 5, in which official practices pertaining to the HSAS are discussed. Moreover, in its critique of metageographies more broadly, it is part of both this chapter’s and this thesis’ central assertion that homeland security might benefit from more nuanced consideration that resists overarching frameworks, and that global metanarratives are too simplistic in understanding something as multifarious as the war on terror (Dalby, 2012).

For Gregory (2011: 239), ‘the everywhere war’ – written in his title with the definite article and without inverted commas – is exemplified by the fact that, “Violence can erupt on a commuter train in Madrid, a house in Gaza City, a poppyfield in Helmand or a street in Ciudad Juarez”. Thus, Western (especially American) security measures can be exercised anywhere and everywhere, as part of what Gregory (2011: 238, 247) repeatedly calls the increasing militarisation of the entire “planet”. But both of these statements can be problematised. Transportation networks in Madrid and residences in Gaza City have been affected by the war on terror for very particular reasons: al-Qaeda attacked Madrid, amongst other motivations, because of their displeasure with that country’s involvement in the war on terror and the fact that, in targeting a large urban agglomeration, damage and terror could be heightened; poppyfields have become battlefields in Helmand because the Taliban gave material support to al-Qaeda within Afghanistan’s borders, and coalition forces invaded in response. The war on terror is not everywhere, but somewhere in particular. There are reasons that

it is 'fought' in Madrid and Helmand and the use of certain terms to characterise the war on terror, like "everywhere war" and "planetary garrison" (Gregory, 2011: 238), can obscure these particular geographies.

At first, though, the HSAS seemed to adhere to this 'everywhere' hypothesis; it was, in the words of the terrorism analyst, Gordon Woo (2011, interview), "geography blind." Or, as Tom Ridge (2009: 83) recalls in his memoirs, *The test of our times*, the HSAS was originally created to offer warnings to "the nation" that another attack might occur anywhere in "the country". Indeed, the HSAS' very name was a spatial metaphor that implied a singular space in which anywhere and everywhere was potentially at risk, with no variation between certain locations (Kaplan, 2003). The System's founding document, Homeland Security Presidential Directive-3 (2002: 1), declared that, "The [entire] nation requires a Homeland Security Advisory System", for the benefit of "[all] the American people". The language and geographical imagination employed here are discussed in greater depth later, but what is of note for the moment is that the HSAS appeared to conform, quite exactly, to the 'everywhere' hypothesis. As Hannah (2006: 630) would conclude in 2006, "The implication of the DHS and its alerts is that threats to security are themselves inherently national in scope", or as Farish (2008: 99) would define the System's warnings, "cleverly nonspecific".

But was this the implication? Hannah's (2006) and Farish's (2008) suggestions that HSAS alerts were nationwide and nonspecific in orientation, respectively, overlook the events of the years after its implementation in 2002; a history that also enables us to further break down the notion that the war on terror, in its domestic American iteration, can be understood as an 'everywhere war'. In 2003, Shawn Reese, of the Congressional Research Service (CRS), issued the first government report on the HSAS, *Homeland Security Advisory System: some issues for congressional oversight*.<sup>5</sup> Authored on his own initiative (Reese, 2012, interview), the report suggested that, "[Congress] might instruct DHS to use the HSAS to provide specific warnings to targeted federal facilities, regions, states, localities, and private sector industries" (Reese, 2003: 5). Partially, Reese was responding to criticisms from state and local authorities that the DHS' nationwide warnings were not applicable to their particular locations (Reese, 2003). For them, such criticism was purely pragmatic: they resented paying for additional security measures, such as overtime for police, when the threat might not even be to their location (Reese, 2003). In the words of

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<sup>5</sup> The CRS is a government agency within the Library of Congress that supports the work of Congress. Reese's report went through a further seven editions (Reese, 2004a, 2004b, 2005a, 2005b, 2006, 2007, 2008), as the legislative and bureaucratic apparatuses around the System shifted over time and his previous reports became outdated.

Scott Behunin (2004: v), a homeland security official from Utah, “Warnings specific to New York City have a different value in Utah”, but the HSAS, because its alerts were nationwide, lacked the flexibility to incorporate such nuance.

Building upon Reese’s initial report, the Government Accountability Office (GAO), a larger institution than the CRS with the ability to offer more detailed reports to Congress, authored its own reviews of the HSAS (Jenkins and Sebastian, 2004a; 2004b). Like Reese (2003), the GAO criticised the HSAS’ adherence to an ‘everywhere’ conception of the terrorist threat, itemising the specific costs incurred by states and localities, of which the vast majority were superfluous (Jenkins and Sebastian, 2004b). Rather than being “cleverly nonspecific” (Farish, 2008: 99), HSAS alerts were wasting precious taxpayer dollars. In tenor, the CRS’ and GAO’s reports matched those of several academic treatments of the HSAS that emerged around the same time (Aguirre, 2003; Knight, 2005; MacManus and Caruson, 2006; Major and Atwood, 2004). These were frequently brief and didactic, and concerned with refining the System going forward. Thus, MacManus and Caruson (2005: 17) suggested that, “Florida’s city and county officials, like their counterparts across the United States, generally do not give the color-coded system very high marks”; the reason for their dissatisfaction being that, “Specialists need detailed and position-specific information”. In other words, the HSAS’ lack of geographical specificity was problematic.

Similar recommendations were issued by think tanks and other advocacy groups. In response to a general call by the OHS for feedback on the System immediately after its implementation, the Partnership for Public Warning (PPW) – a non-profit, public-private entity established in the aftermath of 9/11 to improve the US’ warning capabilities – submitted a series of recommendations (PPW, 2002a; 2002b; 2003), noting that, “The current Homeland Security Advisory System generally provides a single level of threat for the entire nation.” (PPW, 2003: 11); before asking (and clearly favouring an answer in the affirmative), “Should the system be revised to provide tailored threat levels for specific geographic regions or other types of targets?” Elsewhere, think tank analysts, including Charles Peña (2002a, 2002b, 2002c) of the Cato Institute, James Carafano (2004, with Ha Nguyen) of the Heritage Foundation, and Michael Wermuth (2004) of the RAND Corporation followed suit; arguing, variously, that the System’s warnings were too general (Peña, 2002c), inapplicable to the whole country (Carafano and Nguyen, 2004), and would therefore benefit from being more region specific (Wermuth, 2004).<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>6</sup> Interviews with each of these think tank analysts have been conducted, and are used throughout the remainder of this thesis (see Appendix 9.2).

Broadly, then, such accounts criticised the HSAS through the tenets of ‘risk communication’: protocols designed to assist governments and other authorities in conveying the likelihood of particular dangers to citizens (Gray and Ropeik, 2002) (discussed further in Chapter 4). Indeed, the GAO’s final report on the HSAS was entitled, “Communication protocols and risk communication principles can assist in refining the advisory system”, and with respect to these principles noted that, in addition to the improved dissemination of alerts, “specific threat information and guidance [should accompany any alteration in the HSAS’ level]” (Jenkins and Sebastian, 2004a: 4). Similar sentiments were found in the second main corpus of academic texts on the System other than that above: a series of unpublished master’s dissertations, some authored by students of civilian universities (Greenhalgh, 2007; Richerson, 2004); some by active duty servicewomen and men, or other public servants in the security field (Bailey, 2010; Behunin, 2004; Boyd, 2008; Cockrum, 2008; Cox, 2010; Ryczek, 2010). The majority of the latter were written by researchers at the Naval Postgraduate School in Monterey, California; a School that supports the DHS’ Homeland Security Academy Program (HSAC, 2008), and that Morrissey (2011a) suggests has had a significant impact on US government policy.<sup>7</sup>

But did literatures published by the School affect government policy in the case of the HSAS? To answer this is to acknowledge that the literatures discussed in this section, but also others (as we shall see), demonstrate a differing degree of agency. In other words, some of them problematised the academic notion of the ‘everywhere war’ not just through their content, but also through the very ways that they were read and practiced. Thus, they should be understood not only as representations, but as texts with non-representational effects, too (theoretical terms that are discussed in greater depth in the next section); ‘performances’, in Anderson and Harrison’s (2010: 19) terms. Whilst the work of the Naval Postgraduate School may feed into government policy in certain instances (Morrissey, 2011a), there is no evidence that any of the publications originating from this institution altered the HSAS’ development; not least because the majority were published after the System had been unofficially retired in 2006 (see Chapter 5). The same seems to be true for academic texts, excepting Gray and Ropeik (2002), whose examination of risk communication protocols was cited in the GAO’s final report (2004a: 128); a report that does appear to have influenced the HSAS’ development and thus had at least a level of agency itself.

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<sup>7</sup> The School is discussed further, in the context of its homeland security archives and imbrications with government, in the next chapter.

The GAO's report was mandated by a series of congressional hearings on the HSAS in 2004 (*Hearing* [Select Committee], 2004; *Hearing* [Subcommittee], 2004), and thus had the authority of congressional endorsement behind its recommendations for greater HSAS geographical specificity. Although there is no way to know unequivocally, it seems almost certain that these hearings and the report that followed were part of the reason that the DHS decided to make the HSAS more geographically specific, along with other factors (described in Chapter 5). The GAO's report was published, for example, on June 25, 2004, less than six weeks before the DHS issued its first geographically specific alert (DHS and FBI, 2004), and DHS officials were briefed by the report's authors in person (Jenkins, 2012, interview; Sebastian, 2012, interview). Similarly, whilst it is not possible to determine for certain that the think tank publications of Charles Peña, James Carafano and Mike Wermuth directly influenced the DHS' thinking on the HSAS, all three testified at the congressional hearings above. Thus, their opinions were able to enter the bureaucratic review of the HSAS in a way that those of others, especially academics, were not; attesting to the currency of certain elites and institutions in the formulation of governmental geopolitical knowledge over others (discussed further in the next chapter).

For Gregory (2011: 238), the fact that the war on terror has seen terrorist attacks in, amongst other places, "Casablanca, Lahore, London, Madrid, Moscow, Mumbai... suggest[s] the need to analyse... what we might call 'the everywhere war'"; for Hannah (2006) and Farish (2008), the DHS and the HSAS imply that all terrorist threats to the US are necessarily national in scope and nonspecific in nature. As the literatures discussed here attest, however, a more nuanced account of the geographies of the war on terror, especially in the context of the American 'homeland', might better enable us to understand the HSAS. Only the System's earliest alerts were issued for the entire nation and even during this period a succession of writers, from academics to think tank analysts to government researchers, recognised that the notion of a terrorist threat to 'everywhere' was too simplistic; reflecting the concerns of state and local officials (discussed further in Chapter 5). The DHS itself, with the release of HSPD-7 (2003), began to refine its conception of where threats to security might be located by identifying vulnerable critical infrastructure, and government reports by the GAO further refined their warnings leading to the first geographically specific alert in 2004. Notions of the war on terror as an 'everywhere war', then, were being challenged in the earliest years of this conflict within the context of homeland security and the HSAS, because they made little sense 'on the ground'.

## **2.2 Securitisation, visual culture and non-representational theories**

To better understand the processes by which the HSAS was actually rendered through specific places, rather than ‘everywhere’, the notion of ‘securitization’ is instructive; and a theory that can, in many ways, be refined by recent interventions within human geography. The concept is foregrounded here because of its frequent invocation with regard to the advent of homeland security and the war on terror (Amoore, 2009; Graham, 2006; Mabee, 2007); its especial focus upon how security threats become represented, in which the HSAS was clearly implicated; and its use as a starting point for more detailed consideration of the ‘image’ in critical geopolitics and human geography. Emerging from the Copenhagen School, “Securitization theory”, in Ingram’s (2010: 609) opinion, “tries to approach security less as a policy field defined by military, intelligence and police institutions and national interests than a speech act with a grammar that invokes emergency measures to confront urgent threats to a referent object.” In other words, “In securitization theory, “security” is treated not as an objective condition but as the outcome of a specific social process: the social construction of security issues (who or what is being secured, and from what) is analyzed by examining the “securitizing speech-acts” through which threats become represented and recognized.” (Williams, 2003: 512). Such speech-acts might include, for example, those statements mentioned previously, in which members of the Bush administration and homeland security officials compared the war on terror to previous conflicts and, in the process, represented Islamist terrorism as a danger equivalent to existential threats from the past, such as World War Two.<sup>8</sup>

Securitization’s focus upon the discursive, though, should not occlude the fact that the identification and mitigation of threats has material effects and geographies, too (Kuus, 2010). For Mabee (2007: 385), in the context of the war on terror, “The securitisation of terrorism is, therefore, not only represented by marking terrorism as a security issue, it is also solidified in the organisation of security policy-making within the US state.” And this includes “the institutionalism of threat response.” (Mabee, 2007: 385). Thus, Mabee cites the creation of the DHS as part of the securitization effort by the American government since the 9/11 attacks (and for more on the geographies and geopolitics of organisations, especially the DHS, see Chapters 3 and 4). Elsewhere, Hyndman (2007) considers sites such as border posts to be part

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<sup>8</sup> It is important to remember within these academic debates that, whilst we can usefully talk of the social construction of security, as securitisation theory does, the threat of terrorism is not an illusion. Whilst it might be ‘overblown’ (Mueller, 2006), and the HSAS might be part of this (see below), the very power of securitisation derives from the fact that there exist actual dangers in the world (Williams, 2003).

of the geographies of securitization: explicitly ‘othering’ certain people and spaces, in contrast to ‘safer’ domestic equivalents. As such, we might refine Ingram’s (2010) definition above to suggest that although ‘security’ is not an unproblematic and stable “policy field defined by military, intelligence and police institutions”, the actions and geographies of these actors are still important in the ongoing process of defining what is and is not a threat to security.

In this sense, securitization is both predicated upon a simple binary politics of identity, “understood as the outcome of exclusionary practices in which resistant elements to a secure identity on the “inside” are linked through a discourse of “danger” with threat identified and located on the “outside” (Campbell, 1998: 68), but also a more complex process than this suggests; realised through particular sites and activities, objects and people. To capture this complexity, we might emphasise more than just the materialities and geographies of securitization, and nuance its conception of how representations function as part of these, too (Hansen, 2011; McDonald, 2008; Williams, 2003). Thus, as Williams (2003: 512) contends, “As political communication becomes increasingly entwined with the production and transmission of visual images, the processes of securitization take on forms, dynamics, and institutional linkages that cannot be fully assessed by focusing on the speech-act alone.” (Williams, 2003: 512). The HSAS is a case in point. If the DHS is partly an apparatus of securitisation (Mabee, 2008), then so too was a policy that, as a frequently visual representation of the terrorist threat, attempted to calibrate for Americans the likelihood of a terrorist attack (Adelman, 2009). Moreover, we might go further and suggest that not only should other representations such as images be considered in greater depth in the processes of securitisation, but that representationalist conceptions of the ‘image’ itself might be refined, too.

Here, recent debates within human geography and critical geopolitics regarding the efficacy of representational and non-representational approaches come to the fore. In critical geopolitics, discourses and representations have been objects of study, including texts, images and speeches, for some time (Atkinson and Dodds, 2000). Thus, Jo Sharp (1993; 1996; 2000a) has considered American identity as revealed through the periodical, *Reader’s Digest*; Simon Dalby (1996), the writings of American intellectuals and statesmen on security and the geopolitical specifications therein; Gearoid Ó Tuathail, Simon Dalby and Paul Routledge (1998), the statements and geopolitical imperatives of think tanks and policy groups, such as the US Committee on the Present Danger. Later, though, this focus was challenged. Thus, Nigel Thrift (2000: 380, 381) bemoaned the fact that, “Nowadays, geopolitics tends to be constructed as a discourse which can be understood discursively”; part of what

he called, “the mesmerized attention to texts and images in critical geopolitics, and critical geography more broadly, at the expense of other mobiles.” In its place, Thrift (2000) advocated a greater consideration of ‘the little things’ in the study of geopolitics, including materialities, bodies, performances and practices, as part of a broader shift within human geography toward the non-representational and the affective (Anderson and Harrison, 2010).

Since then, though, the study of representations has retained much of its currency within critical geopolitics, with films (Dodds, 2006; Power and Crampton, 2007), cartoons (Dodds, 2007; Falah, Flint and Mamadouh, 2006; Ridanpää, 2009), comic books (Dittmer, 2005), and postage stamps (Raento, 2006), amongst others, being subject to analysis. At the same time, such discussions of visual forms have engaged more explicitly with the non-representational qualities of images, including, for example, the ways in which audiences are actually affected by them (Dodds, 2006). Elsewhere, Campbell (2007), MacDonald (2006) and Hughes (2007) have stressed how geopolitical viewing is often an embodied process, dependent upon characteristics such as race and gender; and the collection, *Observant states: geopolitics and visual culture* (Macdonald, Hughes and Dodds, 2010), drawn upon throughout this thesis, has assembled a collection of essays that examine the interplay between geopolitics, affects and visual representations. Within this collection, Carter and McCormack’s (2010: 103-104, emphasis in original) contribution, in particular, has stressed that, “conceiving of affectivity as non-representational does not necessarily encourage us to attend less to the politics and geopolitics of images; indeed, it encourages us to think further and think differently about what images are and, perhaps more importantly, about what images can *do* within and through contemporary geopolitical cultures.”

There is then, I believe, “a lot of good reason to continue paying attention to representation. Despite new interests in discovering nonrepresentational engagements with the world, representing is still a key strategy knowingly or unknowingly utilized by virtually everyone every day.” (Dittmer, 2010: 52, and see, too, Puar, 2007: 209). At the same time, as Dittmer (2011) stresses elsewhere, non-representational theories can also be used productively in understanding images. The HSAS was a hybrid of both representational and non-representational elements, which testifies to the difficulty, even impossibility, of focussing analytically upon either one or the other. Its colour-coded portion was unequivocally a representation of the threat of terrorism to the US: it was designed and functioned as such, despite limitations, criticisms and controversies, which are the subject of this thesis. But the System also included, as the previous section attests, the issuance of nationwide



alerts that triggered specific security practices, and with which state and local governments disagreed. As such, it had non-representational effects, too. Indeed, its colour-coded portion was bound up with the non-representational itself, with the image affecting people and then evoking, in some, particular emotions: from amusement (Brigham, 2005), to fear (Eisenman et al., 2009) (see below).

Moreover, in addition to reasserting the importance of representationalism, I believe that the preeminent focus upon visual representations within critical geopolitics and human geography (Hughes, 2007), is also of enduring value (Driver, 2003); albeit in conjunction with other sensory engagements. Western societies, such as the US, are still in large part dependent upon what MacDonald, Dodds and Hughes (2010: 3) have called, “‘visual economy’, a particular settlement of late capitalism in which the production, transmission and consumption of images has become one of the enabling conditions of everyday life for citizen and state”. At the same time, this does not mean that the visual should be considered in isolation. Pinkerton (2005: 20), for example, has noted the importance of visual forms of media, but supplemented their analysis by examining radio: “still the most important media for many communities, especially in the Global South.” The HSAS was the product of a country within the technologically-developed ‘Global North’, but it existed in many different registers, as well. Whilst its most famous aspect was visual (Brigham, 2005), understanding the history of the whole System requires an appreciation of aural and tactile entities, amongst others; including its announcements at airports and the tactility of the material culture, such as computers and touch screens (Ash, 2009), through which it was rendered and communicated (Chapter 5).

Moreover, if the HSAS was multimodal in terms of the senses required for its engagement, it was also multimodal in the more traditional manner of its wider discourse. For Young (2001: 400), drawing upon Foucault (2002), a discourse can be defined as “a ‘regulated practice’ that accounts for a group of statements.” And together, such statements act to structure the way that a particular thing is known (Rose, 2007). In the case of visual culture, as Rose continues (2007: 11), “virtually all visual images are multimodal in this way – they always make sense in relation to other things including written texts and very often other images”. As with securitisation, discourse analysis has been criticised for its (perhaps understandable) initial focus upon the discursive and representational (Müller, 2008). Thus, Müller (2008) has advocated that in order to understand how particular statements are part of a wider discourse, we might consider not only other texts and images, but also practices. Whilst Müller (2008) omits consideration of other non-representational factors, such as affect, because of his perception that the latter ignores questions of

political power (a perception that is discussed later in this chapter), I believe that such qualities might be productively incorporated, too.

Let us consider, for example, the interplay between memories, affects and geopolitical knowledge, through a brief discursive analysis of the Abu Ghraib images of torture; one of the most famous images of the war on terror (Philpott, 2005). In Holloway's (2008: 148) opinion, the reason that these images became so iconic "was that they seemed so familiar, evoking and activating numerous other traditions, texts and fragments of everyday American visual culture through which Americans encountering the images could filter the implications of what was happening in Iraq." In particular, "Contemporary responses compared the Abu Ghraib pictures to imagery from Vietnam and the Second World War, and to genres that included sports 'trophy' photos, lynching photos, photos from concentration camps" (Holloway, 2008: 148). Understanding these images, then, required an appreciation of the visual discourses and representations of which they were a part, but also a recognition of how these images affected people; stimulating memories in the mind of the individual and ultimately triggering emotional reactions, such as shock and disgust (counterpoised, perhaps, to the laughter of the torturers) (Philpott, 2005). Again, the 'divide' between the 'representational' and the 'non-representational' was bridged.

The linkages between the HSAS and other images and texts – from Cold War civil defence to the war on terror, both foreign and domestic – are discussed later in this thesis (see, especially, Chapters 4 and 8), but we might also mention here, as an example of the interplay between the representational and the non-representational, how the same multifariousness as that of the Abu Ghraib discourse above is present in the academic discourse of the HSAS. Thus, Shapiro and Cohen (2007), in their analysis of the System, considered both the HSAS' colour-coded portion (its representation of the terrorist threat), and the confusion of state and local authorities regarding the actions that they should take at each level (its non-representational affectivity and associated security practices). Elsewhere, Aguirre (2003), Knight (2005) and Moe (2009) explored further the limitations of the former category through analyses of how and why the HSAS' colour-coded representation was confusing; and Paul and Park (2009), Major and Atwood (2004), and MacManus and Caruson (2006), the latter, through discussions of how the System triggered a raft of non-representational practices and was received differently by various actors according to geographical scale. In short, all of these texts considered what might be called the HSAS' 'representational' and 'non-representational' aspects in combination, and segued between the two without considering there to be a divide.

In finishing this section, then, I want to advocate the opportunities of embracing both representational and non-representational approaches, and the arbitrariness, in some ways, of separating them at all. Indeed, the importance of both to geopolitical analysis has not just been stated explicitly within critical geopolitics and elsewhere (Dittmer, 2010; Puar, 2007, respectively), but is implied by non-representational accounts, too, through their very medium. What many of these non-representational works appear to overlook, for example, is the fact that they are representations themselves: amalgamations of texts and images designed to portray a deferred object, such as a topic or theory, to an audience (see Anderson and Harrison, 2010). Were this thesis to subscribe only to traditional representationalism and treat the HSAS accordingly, it would be limited by its omission of the affects and practices associated with the System that made it meaningful (Chapters, 6 and 7). Conversely, if it were to focus only upon non-representational aspects of the HSAS, it would ignore not only the fundamental truth that the HSAS was a representation, but the other representations of terrorist threats that both inspired the System (Chapter 4), and were inspired by it, in turn (Chapter 8). And throughout, it would partially undermine the legitimacy of its arguments by the very medium through which they were presented.<sup>9</sup>

Therefore, for the purposes of this thesis and in keeping with Cresswell (2012), neither the metanarrative of ‘representationalism’ nor ‘non-representationalism’ will be dogmatically favoured at the expense of the other. Indeed, one might make the case that such labels at all are unhelpful (Cresswell, 2012). Rather, as Cresswell (2006: 4) has stated previously, with particular regard to his geographical field of interest, “To understand mobility without recourse to representation on the one hand or the material corporeality on the other is, I would argue, to miss the point.” What is required, instead, is an analysis that attends to the co-constitution of both (Cresswell, 2006). Bialasiewicz et al. (2007: 407) have made a similar point, arguing that the notion of security’s ‘performativity’, “challenges any implicit valorisation of linguistic representations within post-structuralist approaches without resorting to non-representational theory’s tendency to reinstall an ideal/ material hierarchy by emphasizing lived practice over and above images and texts”. Rather, for them, security practice is at least partially rendered through the performance of particular discourses (explored further with reference to Tom Ridge’s press conference

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<sup>9</sup> Indeed, in this way there is a perhaps unresolved tension at the very heart of non-representational theory. It suggests that texts and representations are “performative presentations, not reflections of some *a priori* order waiting to be unveiled, decoded, or revealed” (Anderson and Harrison, 2010), but it necessarily treats representationalist texts of human geography in just this way in order to justify itself in the first place (see Thrift, 2000).

unveiling of the HSAS in Chapter 4). A full reconciliation between representational and non-representational approaches is certainly beyond the scope of the present work. What I attempt to do here, though, is explore some of the strengths and limitations of both, and the ways that both of these theories can be applied to the HSAS, which are drawn upon throughout the remainder of this thesis.

### **2.3 Affect and the conception of ‘governments’ and ‘populations’**

Indeed, notions of affectivity, under the rubric of non-representational theory, can be put to use in refining some of the metageographies of ‘governments’ and ‘populations’ that have been used within scholarship of the war on terror and homeland security: groups that are invoked throughout this thesis and thus benefit from a clear conceptualisation at the outset. With respect to the former, Lauren Martin and Stephanie Simon (2008: 282), in their analysis of the DHS, have argued that homeland security demonstrates “Michel Foucault’s concept of governmentality”; a term that has been used by other authors in consideration of the same project (Amoore, 2006; Amoore and de Goede, 2008), and is useful as a starting point for analysis, accordingly. For Ingram (2010: 608), “Foucault used the term governmentality to describe a form of political rule that emerged in western European societies between the 16<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> centuries in response to problems generated by the growth of populations, cities and economies.” Thus, “governmentality refers to an historical process in which a type of power, ‘government’, attained pre-eminence over other types, such as that of ‘sovereignty’ and ‘discipline’, resulting in the formation of governmental apparatuses, knowledge and, ultimately, administrative states.” (Legg, 2005: 146). In its modern usage, then, one definition would be that, “governmentality refers to the ways in which a state attempts to regulate its people and territories.” (Legg, 2005: 146).

But what exactly are these ‘governmental apparatuses’ and ‘states’ that exercise such governmentality? Indeed, is it possible to talk of a singular ‘state’ at all without resorting to a homogenous conception of the same? Legg (2005: 141) has noted, for example, “the somewhat lax attention to detail in terms of regional or national difference and periodisation that Foucault was often reduced to in attempting to provide schematic descriptions of larger and more complex processes.” Whilst the efficacy, even occasional necessity of such reductions is clear (they allow broad analytical claims, for example), is something not also lost in the process? In the case of homeland security, Martin and Simon’s (2008: 284, 283) governmentality-based analysis suggests that, “As a centre of calculation, DHS’ primary functions are the collection and centralisation of information about threats”, and that, “Faced with

unbounded and unlocatable threats, DHS' activities attempt to rein in the seemingly infinite opportunities for disaster into a matrix of predictable outcomes and measurable results." (Martin and Simon, 2008: 283). But who is this 'DHS'? As the previous sections of this chapter make clear, Martin and Simon's claims themselves may be supportable in certain circumstances, but their unproblematised use of the acronym, 'DHS', which occludes the failures and internal conflicts of homeland security governance, is more problematic. And it is these that the example of the HSAS, particularly its alleged affective manipulation (Chapter 7), can help to highlight.

Allegations that the HSAS might have been manipulated for political gain first surfaced seriously in 2004 when PhD student, Robb Willer (2004), published an academic paper, 'The effects of government-issued terror warnings on presidential approval ratings'.<sup>10</sup> In the article, a time-series statistical analysis was undertaken, which linked elevations in the HSAS' threat level with support for President Bush. For the first five elevations from Code Yellow to Orange, Bush was rewarded with an average increase in polling support of nearly three percent (Willer, 2004). Although concerned with causality rather than intention, the implications of Willer's paper were obvious: if Bush and his administration knew about this correlation, might they have been tempted to issue alerts upon occasions most beneficial to the President, such as the run-up to closely fought elections like the presidential race of 2004, or to distract the electorate from governmental controversies and failures, such as the fact that Bush and his administration ignored intelligence pertaining to al Qaeda before 9/11? (Kirby, 2013). In the years that followed, Willer's findings were supported by numerous other academic papers (Bonilla and Grimmer, 2012; Browne and Silke, 2011; Hodler, Loertscher; Nacos, 2007; Nacos, Bloch-Elkon and Shapiro, 2011; and Rohner, 2007), and in 2009 Tom Ridge (2009) seemed to endorse the allegations, too, by suggesting that some within the Homeland Security Council, which determined the HSAS' level, had pressured him to issue a Code Orange in 2004 without the intelligence to justify such a move.

The strengths of Ridge's claims (as well as why it might have taken him so long to issue them) are discussed in Chapter 7. For the purposes of this section, though, their most pertinent aspect is what they reveal about the actual process of homeland security governance. In this instance, it is limiting to consider the government as a singular entity. On one side, Secretary Ridge, Secretary of State Colin Powell and FBI Director Robert Mueller apparently argued for the level to be maintained at Code Yellow; on the other, Attorney General John Ashcroft and Defense Secretary Donald

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<sup>10</sup> Testifying, again, to the agency of certain texts in the story of the HSAS.

Rumsfeld argued for the reverse (Ridge, 2009). Even those that sat on the Homeland Security Council and disagreed with Ridge's interpretation, such as Rumsfeld and Homeland Security Advisor, Fran Townsend, conceded that there had been heated disagreements as to where to set the HSAS level (Atlantic, 2009; Sharma, 2009). And within the DHS itself, some believed that the HSAS had been manipulated in this fashion (Fenzel, 2011, interview), whilst others did not (Campbell, 2012, interview; Loy, 2012, interview). This is not to say that, ultimately, the Council did not form a consensus opinion, but that describing the 'US government' or the 'DHS' as a singular entity masks the inconsistencies and disagreements that occur beneath these labels, which more 'peopled' accounts of governmental practice (Kuus, 2007), discussed as a methodological approach in the next chapter, can help to ameliorate.

In the case of Martin and Simon (2008: 283), who claim that their paper can be used as a basis for "conceptualising homeland security", such interpersonal affectivity simply does not feature, leading to the reductionist claims about what the DHS is and does mentioned above. Part of the reason for this stems from the fact that Martin and Simon (2008: 284) employ a discourse analysis that, *pace* the discussion in the previous section, incorporates only texts (and only three kinds of these, at that): "public statements by DHS about department development and purpose; advisory panel reports commissioned by the federal government that inform Congressional and DHS security policy; and, binding policy documents and unbinding guidance documents that outline emergency response protocol." But these are very particular, polished documents, designed to portray the DHS as a singular and efficient entity. Using them, one cannot understand the complexities of homeland security's governance, including the failures and internal inconsistencies remarked upon here.<sup>11</sup> Indeed, Martin and Simon's unproblematic conception of the DHS is neatly encapsulated by their omission of 'the little things' in geopolitics, which Thrift (2000: 380) describes as, "mundane worlds like 'the' – which are crucial to how the geopolitical is translated into being." Throughout their paper, they refer to the 'the DHS' as simply 'DHS' (see previous quotations), which is not only grammatically incorrect, but naturalises the DHS: construing the Department as a universal entity, without either definite article or definite place.

The same imprecision regarding the governance of homeland security is demonstrated by the most cited academic paper dedicated to the HSAS, Brian Massumi's (2005), 'Fear (the spectrum said)', in which Massumi attempts an

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<sup>11</sup> At the same time, of course, these official documents are still used as some of the sources that inform this thesis, but amongst other accounts that do not result in such a partial reading of homeland security.

affectual analysis of the System.<sup>12</sup> In his first sentence, Massumi (2005: 31) declares that, “In March 2002, with much pomp, the Bush administration’s new Department of Homeland Security introduced its color-coded terror alert system”. But as we have seen, the DHS was not even in existence at this time; rather, the HSAS was created by its predecessor, the OHS. This is an important distinction because federal offices can be created by presidents, as the OHS was with Executive Order 13228 (2001), but federal departments require congressional approval, as the DHS did with the Homeland Security Act (2002) (Fiorina, Peterson, Voss and Johnson, 2007). Throughout his paper, as Grusin (2010: 120) notes, Massumi positions the US government as “an autonomous, unified agent”. And Massumi construes the American ‘population’ with the same inexactitude. Thus, in engaging with accusations that the HSAS was manipulated for political gain, Massumi (2005: 32) contends that, “The whole population became a networked jumpiness, a distributed neuronal network registering en masse quantum shifts in the nation’s global state of discomfiture in rhythm with leaps between color levels. Across the geographical and social differentials dividing them, the population fell into affective attunement.”

But did they? As we have seen, state and local officials certainly did not fall into ‘affective attunement’ with either the DHS or each other: criticising the HSAS, as they did, because of its inapplicability to their locations. And in 2009, Eisenman et al. (2009) undertook a survey of Los Angeles County (discussed further in Chapters 6 and 7), which demonstrated that not only did reactions to the HSAS appear to vary according to ethnicity and gender, but that, “Vulnerable populations [such as the disabled] experience a disproportionate burden of the psychosocial impact of terrorism threats [including those represented by the HSAS] and our national response” (Eisenman et al., 2009: 168).<sup>13</sup> In other words, the HSAS did not affect uniformly across “geographical and social differentials”, and the “whole population” did not become “a networked jumpiness” (Massumi, 2005: 32). Indeed, some people presumably had no knowledge of the System at all. Rather, this aspect of the HSAS was emblematic of a war that has constructed racial and gendered subjectivities in particular and problematic ways (Puar, 2007) (discussed later in this thesis). In approaching the affectivity of the HSAS in this way, Massumi seems to invoke a form of Foucauldian biopolitical argument, suggesting that in the war on terror entire ‘populations’ have been regulated in particular ways and that they have acquiesced to this regulation (Legg, 2005; Reid, 2005). But just like the criticism frequently levelled

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<sup>12</sup> This is based upon a Web of Knowledge search (<http://apps.webofknowledge.com/>) of those papers in which the HSAS is the chief subject, undertaken on June 26, 2013.

<sup>13</sup> Similar findings had been reported earlier, albeit in lesser depth, by Chiriboga (2007), the Council for Excellence in Government (2004), Knight (2005), and Stewart, McLean and Huckaby (2006).

at Foucault that he ignored the agency of individuals (Said, 2005), Massumi fails to appreciate that although the DHS had the power to issue alerts, different people reacted to them in different ways. In other words, they had agency, too.

Indeed, the agency of individuals, with respect to the wider organisations of which they are a part, has been tackled by writers within political geography and critical geopolitics. And this work is useful in offering a more nuanced conceptualisation of how such individuals exercise power and agency in the case of policies such as the HSAS. For Müller (2011), in his paper, 'Opening the black box of the organization for a critical geopolitics', the role of the individual can be foregrounded, but it is important not to lose sight of the wider organisation of which they are a part. Thus, Müller (2011: 12) contends that agency does not necessarily reside with any specific individual, "who are ascribed a privileged position in the making of geopolitics or in *a priori* powerful centers, but is distributed in relations." This is not to say that the thoughts and actions of certain individuals cannot be focussed upon, but that the efficacy of their actions must be seen as partially, perhaps wholly derived from their relationships with others within particular organisations. As Painter (2000: 361) has said, the state and its institutions are "social arenas", dependent upon "myriad social processes and networks of social relations." Thus, in the case of the HSAS, although the original idea for the System can be traced to an OHS employee, John Fenzel, it was Fenzel's relationship with the OHS' Chief, Tom Ridge, that allowed the System to be expedited so swiftly (see Chapter 4). Furthermore, it was the relational bureaucratic apparatus of meetings and OHS committees that then allowed for the discussions between these two persons to be taken further, ultimately resulting in the creation of the HSAS with the signature of HSPD-3. To capture this, I have traced aspects of the HSAS (such as its creation) back to individuals, but then demonstrated how their thoughts and ideas were filtered through the wider bureaucracies and "social arenas", in Painter's (2000) term, of the OHS, the DHS and the US government.

Thus, Massumi's work, which omits such considerations of embodiment, power and agency from its affectual analysis of the HSAS, is emblematic of what several theorists, broadly informed by feminist perspectives, have cited as affect theory's limitations more broadly. Thus, for Tolia-Kelly (2006: 213), "what is occluded in the writing on *affect* is sensitivity to 'power geometries'"; for Thien (2005: 453), "The recent analyses of affect direct attention to the virtual and transhuman"; ignoring, as such, "humanity in all our diversity" (and similar suggestions have been made by Anderson and Smith, 2001; Davidson and Milligan, 2004; Nash, 2000; Pain, 2009; Sharp, 2009). Instead, such writers often posit 'emotion' as a critical notion for study



rather than 'affect'; contending that this term is better able to capture notions of embodiment that resist top-down models (Pain and Smith, 2008a). Such overarching approaches might include, for example, Thrift's (2004: 57) affectual conception of cities, in which the latter are described as "roiling maelstroms of affect"; an expression with so little analytical purchase that it is difficult to determine what exactly it might mean. In implicit response to this assertion, Pain and Smith (2008b: 2) contend that, "Fear [for example] does not pop out of the heavens and hover in the ether before blanketing itself across huge segments of cities and societies; it has to be lived and made." The superorganicism of Thrift's argument, then, is replaced by Pain and Smith with a greater emphasis on smaller-scale, interpersonal affectivity.

For many of these authors, emotional geography is considered a superior approach to affectual geography precisely because of its finer attunement to questions of embodiment, and how individuals actually intersect with issues of power in various ways throughout human society. Thus, for Tolia-Kelly (2006: 213), what affect theory still requires is "an acknowledgement that these [power geometries] are vital to any individual's capacity to affect and be affective." The creation of the HSAS, as Chapter 4 will demonstrate, was dependent upon just such affectivity, with Tom Ridge (2009) designating and trusting the principal architect of the System, John Fenzel, because of his confident attitude and bodily comportment; the latter having been inspired to suggest that a system for public warning might be required in the first place, because of the confusion etched across his superior's face (Fenzel, 2011, interview). As the discussion of Eisenman et al. (2009) above attests, too, reception of the HSAS was differentiated by bodily characteristics including race and ethnicity, raising several questions about 'power geometries' with respect to racial politics (Chapters 6 and 7). Thus, if we want to understand better how and why the HSAS was created and the ways that it affected people, we need to consider how different people, at different times, were differently affective and affected (Tolia-Kelly, 2006).

In fairness, whilst affectual analyses may have omitted such consideration as of 2006, today such capacities are arguably the subject of increasing concern. Jason Dittmer (2010: 94) has described how one understanding of affect, 'contagion', helps to demonstrate its communication between people, "through body language and the mutual experience of environments".<sup>14</sup> Thus, affect need not be 'impersonal' (Thien, 2005); it can also direct attention toward interpersonal communication and the abilities of certain people in this regard. Indeed, this particular understanding of

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<sup>14</sup> Dittmer's (2010: 94) other categorisations of affect, 'amplification' and 'resonance', are explored further later in this thesis.

affect has been used to directly critique impersonal metageographies of the war on terror and homeland security, making it of particular efficacy to this chapter. For Anderson and Adey (2011: 1107), in the UK context, “security affects, such as [the] confusion or fun [of civil defence planners], are part of apparatuses of security, rather than being formed through an epochal ‘age of’ or ‘culture of’ x or y emotion.” Frank Furedi’s (2006) notion that Western democracies are currently living within a singular ‘culture of fear’, for example, or Ulrich Beck’s (2002) notion of ‘world risk society’, are considered too simplistic within this formulation (Anderson and Adey, 2011). This is not to suggest that we should ignore writers like Beck – the war on terror is entwined with notions of risk (Morrissey, 2011b), and Beck’s work is drawn upon later – but that metageographies like ‘risk society’ often break down when particular case studies are applied to them, such as the HSAS, because they demonstrate that, in fact, “security affects emerge from the active, productive, and continual weaving of a multiplicity of bits and pieces.” (Anderson and Adey, 2011: 1095).

Moreover, there are other benefits of affectual analysis for the present study. As Pile (2010: 8) has stated, “Affect is temporally *prior* to the representational translation of an affect into a knowable emotion.” In other words, affect can help in understanding that which occurs beneath the threshold of conscious awareness (Connolly, 2002). Later, this thesis reflects upon the possible ability of the HSAS’ colours to affect behaviour (Chapter 7), including an increased tendency to vote for President Bush. Whilst, as will be explored, we can certainly link visual qualities like colour to the emotions that they trigger (Barry, 1997; Cosgrove and della Dora, 2005), affect also directs attention toward the initial moment of response by people to particular stimuli; before such responses have even been translated as emotions. As with non-representational and representational theories, then, I believe that both affectual and emotional geography have strengths; and that rather than favouring one or the other (see Anderson and Harrison, 2006; Thien, 2005), both might be productively employed together. The former helps us to think about certain aspects, such as precognition, that emotional geography arguably omits, and the latter provides useful critiques of affectual geography, too, and is drawn upon throughout this thesis.

## **2.4 Popular geopolitics and resistance to federal metanarratives**

So far, we have considered some of the ways that the DHS’ original intentions and designs for the HSAS fragmented and changed after the System’s implementation, because of the diversity of the opinions and actions of those within the Homeland Security Council, the DHS, state and local governments, and the American

‘population’. For all of these actors and at all of these scales, though, we might say that broadly the HSAS was taken seriously. This is not to say that it was construed positively, but that for state and local governments, and later the DHS, the System was a policy that whilst limited could be refined; for certain members of the Homeland Security Council, a tool that could perhaps be manipulated for electoral advantage; for certain Americans, particularly minorities, a warning system that evoked fear. But what about those that took the HSAS less seriously, such as those that mocked the System outright? During the HSAS’ period of implementation from 2002 to 2011, it attracted a large amount of ridicule: from late-night television hosts to stand-up comedians; television series to Hollywood films; novels to art installations (Brigham, 2005). This chapter finishes, then, with a consideration of more popular forms of geopolitics and, in particular, the geopolitics of humour.

Considering popular culture’s engagement with the HSAS also allows us to further refine Martin and Simon’s (2008) governmentality-based approach to understanding homeland security, predicated upon the work of Michel Foucault. With respect to Foucault’s conception of power, for example, Edward Said (2005: 268) has suggested that, “Foucault is always talking about power from the point of view, on the one hand, of the way power always wins; and then, succumbing to that power, he talks about victims of power with a certain amount of pleasure.” Such a preoccupation within Foucault’s work can arguably occlude the fact that, as Legg (2005: 140) suggests, “people resisted, subverted and problematised these [governmental] programmes”. Whether we subscribe to this reading of Foucault or not – elsewhere, for example, Foucault (1979: 304) demonstrates clear sympathy for those subjected to the judgment and control of persons in authority – certainly it is the simplified, unidirectional notion of power favoured by Martin and Simon (2008), whose conceptualisation of homeland security is based solely upon the texts and actions of the DHS, as we have seen. In understanding the full richness of homeland security, though, we might consider how popular culture, such as comedy, can also be employed to assist in the negotiation of the geopolitical order favoured by those in government or other positions of authority (Purcell, Brown and Gokmen, 2010; Ridanpää, 2009).

In addressing this aspect of the System, I do not wish to claim that there is a sharp divide between those that took the HSAS seriously and those that did not. In Ó Tuathail’s (1998) influential tripartite division, for example, there exist three forms of geopolitics: formal and practical, which broadly refer to the official and practical business of geopolitical thinking and acting; and popular, which refers to the ways in which geopolitical knowledge is made and communicated in more everyday spheres,

such as particular forms of entertainment. These terms are refined in the next chapter, but for the moment I simply wish to acknowledge that they are not discrete categories. The chapter in Tom Ridge's (2009: 83) memoirs dedicated to the HSAS, for example, is entitled, "The colors of fear (and laughter)", and elsewhere Ridge demonstrated a willingness to engage with HSAS humour (Letters to the editor, 2002) (at least up to a point, as Chapter 6 explores). This included appearances on the late-night comedy programme, *The Daily Show with Jon Stewart* (Stewart and O'Neil, 2005a), which was also one of the first outlets to publicly mock the HSAS (Stewart and O'Neil, 2002). Whilst, in his other public statements, Ridge clearly considered the System a serious tool of public safety (see, amongst others, Ridge, 2002a; 2002b), understanding the Secretary's approach to the HSAS purely through 'practical geopolitics' is an oversimplification.

At the same time, there are significant differences in how Ridge used humour to address the System and how dedicated satirists did. For Ridge (2009: 81), humour could be "an effective means of communicating difficult subjects [such as the HSAS]", and thus his engagement with HSAS humour in venues like *The Daily Show* had a purpose: he thought that it might help to promote knowledge of the System. For others, though, subjecting the HSAS to what Brigham (2005: 6) has called "extraordinary ridicule", was clearly not intended to either promote the System or facilitate its success. Louise Amoore (2006: 347), for example, has analysed a cartoon by the San Francisco-based animator, Mark Fiore, in which an animated Ridge (in both senses of the word), "vacillates wildly between the calm assurance that the state has security in control: 'remain calm, stand down, go about your business, code yellow'; and a screaming panic that warns 'they are coming, look! You never know where the terrorists might strike'". For Amoore (2006: 347), "satirical accounts such as Fiore's serve to question what is seen as a normal way of life", and open up a space for critical discussion of the geopolitics of homeland security (Behnke, 2012).

We might ask, though, for whom this space is opened up and questioned? And of what use it is to them? This is, of course, one of the most significant difficulties for analysis within popular geopolitics: understanding how audiences actually respond to popular narratives and the latter's ultimate effects (Dittmer and Dodds, 2008). It returns us, too, to the suggestion that critical geopolitics has traditionally been more interested in studying representations in isolation than their situated affectivity (Thrift, 2000). In understanding the creation of the HSAS, its official practices, and the response of state and local officials to the System, for example, it is possible to interview those 'elites' responsible and study the comments of state and local officials issued publicly and made at congressional hearings (discussed further in the next

chapter). And for Eisenman et al. (2009), in attempting to understand how the HSAS was reacted to by various minority groups in Los Angeles County, eight researchers conducted nearly 2,500 phone surveys over several months. For practical and logistical reasons, though, the same has not been possible here. But this does not mean that we need to ignore the affective qualities of popular culture. What is important to state at the outset, I think, *pace* Amoore and in keeping with the previous discussion, is that there is no single ‘population’, and no simple chain of causality between a particular iteration of popular culture and particular response: Fiore’s work might “serve to question what is seen as a normal way of life”, but who is doing the seeing?

In addition to this initial problematisation, it is also possible to consider affectivity and HSAS satire in other ways, too. Dodds (2006), for example, has considered the reaction of audiences to the James Bond film series through fan discussions on the Internet Movie Database (IMDb). Whilst there is no forum on the HSAS in quite the same way, it is possible to offer an indication of the prevalence of satirical readings of the HSAS. Of the nearly 1,000 images returned through the Internet search engine, Google, for example, over three quarters were images that altered the HSAS’ official colour-coded representation in some way; the majority for comedic effect, created by bloggers, amateur online satirists, and others (see Chapter 6; and for a critique of online archives, the next chapter).<sup>15</sup> Elsewhere, Dodds (2008; 2010b; 2011) has accompanied his analyses of films, in particular, with consideration of their box office returns, which contextualises the representations being addressed and thus helps to break what Thrift (2000: 381) has called “the mesmerized attention to texts and images in critical geopolitics, and critical geography more broadly”, by drawing attention to their reception, too. In this vein, Dittmer and Gray (2010: 1667) have called for an emotional perspective on popular culture “that has been lacking in most work within popular geopolitics”. There are ways, then, that we can nuance our understanding of popular culture, without the need to survey thousands of people.

Central to this, too, is recognising that just as we can overstate who is affected by popular culture, we can also overstate the extent of this affectivity. In humour studies, for example, claims regarding humour’s ability to effect political change have often been circumspect. With reference to communist Russia and Romania, Cochran (1989) and Thurston (1991) have suggested that jokes amongst the populous had little political efficacy in ousting the dictators that they criticised. Whilst in other

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<sup>15</sup> This was based upon the search terms, ‘Homeland Security Advisory System’ and ‘color coded alert’, which, after trial and error, were found to return the greatest quantity of results. The search was undertaken on September 7, 2011.

situations, with less restriction, jokes may have a greater potential to liberate (Lewis, 1987; Lockyer and Pickering, 2008), they are still, in Davies' (2007: 300) opinion, "[simply] an indication of what is happening in a society but they do not feed back into the social processes that generated them to any significant extent." In the case of the HSAS, whilst Ridge clearly felt forced to reply to satirical criticisms in its early days, there is no evidence that this actually affected the System's development at this point. And given Willer's findings in 2004, it appears that for some the HSAS, far from being a joke, was taken seriously enough to affect their vote. By the time Napolitano took office and cited jokes made about the HSAS as a reason for its dissolution, humour may have been having an effect on the System's trajectory (Dodds and Kirby, 2013), but before this the picture is more opaque.

We might break down, too, what we mean by 'humour', which also allows us to reflect further upon the political efficacy of making jokes. In Peterson's opinion (2008: 63), for example, 'satire' is a very particular form of humour: "wit that is sincerely critical rather than merely dismissive". Thus, Jon Stewart's humour is satirical, in Peterson's (2008) opinion, because it is interested in criticising policies (such as the HSAS, as demonstrated above); but that of his fellow late-night host, David Letterman, is not, because it is concerned more with what Peterson (2008: 63) terms, 'pseudo-satire', "to avoid the appearance of partisan preference." Perhaps, though, Peterson's definition of satire is too exacting. As Chapter 6 describes, many of the jokes made online about the HSAS, particularly those that mocked its colour-codes, were brief and 'dismissive'. One, for example, replaced the System's levels with shades of wall paint, from 'daiquiri' to 'rococco' (Singel, 2008); another imagined a Japanese HSAS, from 'contaminated sushi' to 'Godzilla' (Santoso, 2009). But does this mean that these jokes were not also 'sincerely critical', thus meeting Peterson's definition of satire as a result? Even if they did not have explicit political agendas, they were part of a discourse that construed the HSAS as mockable; part of a discourse that meant that for those 'Googling' the HSAS, the images returned were as likely to be satirical as anything else. Again, perhaps a broader definition of 'satire' might similarly broaden our conception of the different ways that jokes can have political efficacy.

It is important to state, then, that humour is not some all-encompassing affective force, but operates through various scales and geographies, and in differing social contexts (Dodds and Kirby, 2013). Whilst it has the potential to function as a form of 'anti-geopolitics' (Routledge, 1998) (a term discussed further in the next chapter), criticising dominant notions of homeland security and the HSAS, the extent of humour's influence necessarily varies from person to person. Dodds and Kirby (2013: 48), for example, have used the term, "The geographical mechanics of humour", to

capture some of this multifariousness. And Purcell, Brown and Gokmen (2010: 374) have defined humour as, “a communication tool for engaging political decisions and their impacts on various levels of society”; a similar definition to that coined by Ridanpää (2009: 729) a year earlier, who describes humour as, “a ‘tool’ giving impetus to various forms of geopolitical processes and discussion in a range of contextual circumstances and at different spatial levels”. Whilst a thorough exploration of this varied reception is beyond the capability of this thesis for the practical reasons discussed above, we can address some of the criticisms made about representationalist geopolitics, such as Thrift’s (2000), by recognising that the claims made about humour here are but one interpretation, and by attempting to consider the affectivity of humour, as Dittmer (2013) has recently recommended.

Moreover, whilst it is necessary to emplace humour of the HSAS within the wider geographies of which it was a part, it is also important to consider the era in which it emerged, too. For at least a certain period after 9/11, making jokes in the US was a markedly more problematic venture than it had been before (Brunn, 2004), and faced the challenge of what Achter (2008: 274) has called, “Comedy in unfunny times.” It is certainly wise to be prudent with reference to such claims (jokes were still being made, as Chapter 6 discusses), but they perhaps reflected a fundamental truth, which also allows for further consideration of the ability of humour to resist official narratives, such as the HSAS (Tibbets, 2011, interview). In the aftermath of the September 11 attacks, for example, Press Secretary Ari Fleischer was quick to issue the ominous warning that, “people have to watch what they say and watch what they do” (Jones, 2009: 33). In understanding what Bleiker (2006: 78) calls, “the relevance of art to the process of coming to terms with 9/11”, then, we might ask whether humour about the HSAS was, in some ways, a method to satirise the wider war on terror without the ‘messiness’ and political danger of criticising an ongoing war effort in which American soldiers were fighting and dying. In keeping with Ridanpää (2009: 729), such a suggestion, elaborated upon in Chapter 6, might also help us to think about how humour functions “in a range of contextual circumstances”.

Finally, I would like to suggest that, despite HSAS humour demonstrating how we can refine broad concepts like ‘governmentality’, references to the System’s comedic value were sometimes reductive in their own right, too. Passing references to the HSAS, for example, often used the System to support wider claims about homeland security. Thus, in Michael Scheuer’s (2004: 84, 164) critique of the war on terror, the System was mentioned just twice, as the ‘streetlight-of-death’, illustrating the comedic ineptitude that he thought had marked the official response to 9/11. For others, mocking was replaced with exasperation, with Mueller (2006) suggesting that

the System demonstrated how the threat of terrorism to the US was ‘overblown’ by politicians and the media (considered further in Chapter 7). And similar references, in both their brevity and purpose, were made elsewhere (see Altheide, 2006; Barkun, 2011; Bennett, 2006; Bobbitt, 2008; Butler, 2006; Graham, 2006; Jackson, 2005; Salter, 2008; Scheuer, 2004; Unger, 2007). Many of these contain useful ideas about homeland security and the HSAS, which are used later in this thesis. The point here is not that any are incorrect, but that all reduce the System’s multiple meanings to a single notion that supports their analysis; metanarratives of the HSAS that this thesis attempts to avoid throughout.

### ***Conclusions***

To reiterate the comment at the head of this chapter, the story of the HSAS consists of multiple components. Whilst this thesis has attempted to draw out several themes from this multiplicity – including the origins of the System, its official practice, its satirical critique, and so forth – it also seeks to resist metageographies and metanarratives: whether this be construing the war on terror as an ‘everywhere war’; considering the DHS or the American population as a single united entity; or arguing that the HSAS can be known through any one theoretical framework, such as ‘securitisation’, ‘govenmentality’ or ‘non-representational theory’. Rather, it endorses the point made by John Law (2003), whose work is discussed further in the next chapter, “that the world is largely messy... [and] that contemporary social science... [is] hopelessly bad at knowing that mess.” In so doing, it is perhaps impossible to avoid the charge frequently levelled against postmodernism that, in suggesting metanarratives should be avoided, a metanarrative is thus posited by necessity (Weinstein, 1995). I do not see, though, how this can be avoided. In addressing the HSAS in this fashion, it is not my intent to say that this is the only way that the System can be known, but that I believe it better encapsulates the research that follows than any of the meta-approaches discussed above.



### **3. Homing in on homeland security:**

#### **The people, places and practicalities of HSAS research**

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Some of the earliest work in critical geopolitics looked at the geopolitical representations and imaginations of political elites, particularly in the US (Dalby, 1990; Ó Tuathail, 1996). At the same time, more popular understandings of geopolitics were also being appraised (Dodds, 1996; Sharp, 1993). Recently, the agenda of the latter has broadened to include a greater consideration of affects, emotions and audiences, as well as the everyday practices of citizens (Dittmer and Gray, 2010). In some ways, though, the conception of elites, such as governments and political agencies, has been left behind; with a continuing focus upon representations, rather than people (Kuus, 2007, 2008, 2013). As Kuus (2007: 243) states, “The methodological emphasis on elite representations... downplays institutions and actors... It disembodies state action and offers us little sense of human agency”. Similarly, whilst the emotional and affectual dimensions of others such as audiences have been considered, less attention has been paid to how academics, including those informed by critical geopolitics and political geography, approach subjects like the ‘US government’ and ‘security’. This chapter attempts to nuance both of these areas through a consideration of positionality, sources and interviews. In this vein, it finishes by problematising the Internet, too; an increasingly important tool in academic research that in conjunction with interviews has been the most useful source of information on the HSAS for this thesis.

#### **3.1 Seeking a balanced approach to the ‘US’ and its security policies**

In the immediate aftermath of 9/11, *The Arab World Geographer* composed a special issue on those attacks, in which it asked for academic reflections from political geographers and others. The contributions of Agnew (2001) and Flint (2001) are useful to reflect upon, in particular, because of their thoughts on how the post-9/11 period should be addressed by academics. In addition to suggesting that US foreign policy was an (at least partial) explanation for the attacks, both situated their interventions with respect to their emotions on the day; emotions, however, that they were quick to acknowledge and apparently suppress. Thus, for Agnew (2001: 85), “As the day [9/11] wore on and into Wednesday, I pushed my feelings aside and began to think how this had been possible”; and for Flint (2001: 77), “We [academics] have had to move beyond the normal human emotions and get back to thinking critically” (Flint, 2001: 77). In attempting to explain the attacks and respond to the (then)

speculation that Osama bin Laden was responsible, Agnew (2001: 85) continued by offering a geopolitical metaphor to his readers: “Bin Laden”, he said, “is the Samuel Huntington of the Arab World, to invoke the name of the Harvard Professor who in 1993 first presented the idea of the “clash of civilizations” as the emerging structure of geopolitics after the Cold War. He is a prophet and organizer of inter-civilizational conflict.”

Certainly, contextualising the events within the wider geopolitics of America’s long-standing and contentious involvement with the Middle East, as both of these authors did, was pertinent in attempting to answer the question that was frequently posed by Americans in the aftermath of 9/11, ‘Why do they hate us?’ (Walsh, 2011). It presented a global, historicised dimension to the attacks, which many at the time, such as newscasters and the print media, were unwilling or unable to provide (Silberstein, 2004); a ‘worldly’ analysis, to quote Said (1994), that has been continued since by other writers in political geography (for example, Ingram and Dodds, 2009). Agnew and Flint’s criticism of their own emotional response to 9/11, though, is perhaps more problematic. Indeed, it is difficult not to see here at least an echo of what Thien (2005: 452) has called, “the binary trope of emotion as negatively positioned in opposition to reason, as objectionably soft and implicitly feminized”. Both of these (male) authors considered emotional reactions to the attacks as ‘beneath’ academic rigour; something to be transcended, rather than an indissoluble part of humanistic scholarship and, indeed, human life (which is what I would contend). It is perhaps interesting to note, as well, the spatial metaphors that were used to ‘distance’ author from emotion. As Thien (2005) suggests, when compared to reason, emotion is often actively ‘positioned’, and here it was either moved ‘aside’ (Agnew, 2001) or moved ‘beyond’ (Flint, 2001). Thus, a particular geographical imagination served to assist in the justification of pronouncements on the post-9/11 world here, because it construed those making them as objective, neutral and reasoned.

Despite Agnew’s (2001: 85) suggestion that his emotions had been sidelined, though, he later invoked a strikingly emotive metaphor that compared Osama bin Laden to Samuel Huntington, in an effort to understand the motivations of the former. There is enough serious, scholarly critique of Huntington’s (1993, 1998) thesis to make such claims superfluous, even troublesome in their provocativeness (see Bassin, 2007; Bialasiewicz, 2006; Said, 2001, amongst others); even allowing for the uniqueness of the times in which they were published. Samuel Huntington’s ‘clash’ hypothesis may be racist, sexist and grossly reductionist (as the authors above describe), but this does not make him comparable to a person that acted out his geopolitical fantasies; killing

thousands in the process. Much has been made, quite rightly, of the ‘somatic marker’ of 9/11 (Ó Tuathail, 2003; and see Damasio, 1996), and its uses and abuses by actors within the Bush administration (see Chapter 4). Less has been said, though, of the ‘somatic markers’ that some academics also trade in. To me, it seems that the only way Samuel Huntington can be compared to Osama bin Laden is affectively; a comparison that works, as Connolly (2002: 34) defines the operation of the ‘somatic marker’, “below the threshold of reflection”. If ‘9/11’ is a somatic marker that leads to reductive categorisations by some (Ó Tuathail, 2003), ‘Huntington’ arguably performs the same function here for Agnew.<sup>16</sup>

Such reductions and reflex associations are emblematic, too, of how the ‘US’ has been construed elsewhere in political geography upon occasion. Three years after Agnew and Flint’s interventions, in the aftermath of the US-led coalition invasion of Iraq, P. J. Taylor (2004: 487) stated that, “the most important question – intellectual, moral, political – of our times is how we understand, interpret and respond to the USA”. He continued that, “for the first time in the history of the modern world-system, the largest economy is controlled by warriors.” (Taylor, 2004: 491). The year before, Ó Tuathail (2003: 857) made a similar point, stating that, “The world’s most powerful military is today led by a cabal of restless nationalists immersed in an anti-intellectual culture of affect and aggressive militarism.” Clearly the US, precisely because of the power that these authors indicate, is important to study (Kuus, 2010) (this thesis agrees by its very topic), but like Agnew’s (2001) account, observations such as these fail to acknowledge that they are themselves emotional and affective in their own ways. Given that Bush and Cheney dodged service in Vietnam and that other key players in his administration, including Rice, Wolfowitz and Rove, never served in the military at all, it perhaps seems strange to make the suggestion that the US during Bush’s tenure was ‘controlled by warriors’ (Taylor, 2004). And given the internal dissent of cabinet officials like Colin Powell, Paul O’Neill and, as we shall see, Tom Ridge (Chapter 7), to whom does the collective, ‘restless cabal’ (Ó Tuathail, 2003), refer?<sup>17</sup>

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<sup>16</sup> We might also consider the extent to which the influence of Huntington’s argument is overemphasised because of this. Tom Ridge (2009: 32), for his part, has called Huntington’s ‘clash’ hypothesis, “a clear and dangerous overstatement”, which he ignored, as such. In perhaps a first for an official within the Bush administration, Ridge (2009: 274), whether intentionally or not, concludes his book by invoking Edward Said’s (2001) criticism of Huntington’s thesis, asking, “Is it a clash of civilizations or clash of ignorance?” Ridge’s comments might attest to the pervasiveness of Huntington’s arguments, but not that they were being uncritically consumed by US political elites.

<sup>17</sup> In his memoirs, for example, Powell (2012) queried President Bush’s suggestion that there had been a deliberative process for deciding whether to invade Iraq, and Ron Suskind (2004b) has detailed the various ways in which Treasury Secretary, Paul O’Neill, dissented against the Bush administration’s line in its early years, which ultimately resulted in his replacement.

It might also be considered what the semantic difference would have been had Taylor replaced 'USA' as his 'most important question' with, for example, 'China'. Here, the American journal, *Foreign Affairs*, is instructive. In that publication, the statement was recently made that, "The rise of China will likely be the most important international relations story of the twenty-first century" (Glaser, 2011); part of a series of essays with the apparent intention of checking that country's power (see Erickson and Strange, 2013; Ikenberry, 2008). *Foreign Affairs*, it should be recalled, was where Huntington first published his thesis, *The Clash of Civilizations* (1993), and is issued by the Council on Foreign Relations, "a unique nongovernmental seedbed of U.S. foreign policy" (Smith, 2004: 192). It is, then, quite different from the journal, *Political Geography*, where Taylor published, and part of a classical rather than critical approach to geopolitics of the kind that critical geopolitics explicitly seeks to critique (Kelly, 2006). But in approach, Glaser's statement was little different from Taylor's: its purpose was to check Chinese power, just as Taylor's was to check American; it assumed that the reason for asking this question to its readers was 'self-evident', just as Taylor did; it traded off the belief that readers would have a particular reaction to the somatic marker, 'China', just as Taylor appears to have believed his readers would to the acronym, 'USA'. This is not to say that there are not some very real differences between the US and China that might justify Taylor's focus – such as the fact that, despite the size of China's military, the US has shown itself markedly more willing to use force around the globe – but that both authors unreflectively invoke certain countries as targets for their criticism.

Such lack of reflection is thrown into particular relief by other approaches to the US and its security policies in the aftermath of 9/11. In the same collection as Agnew and Flint's interventions, for example, Neil Smith (2001: 81) asserted that, "the xenophobic and nationalist hysteria in the immediate aftermath [of 9/11] was in many ways understandable." Smith went on to eloquently denounce such jingoism, but crucially he did not disavow his emotions, or suggest that he could transcend them.<sup>18</sup> Elsewhere, Iris Marion Young (2003), an author not known for her celebration of the American security state, acknowledged the difficulties in making blanket denunciations of American security policies. For her, it was arguable that, "before September 11, airports and other public places in the United States were too lax in their security screening protocol. I welcome more thorough security

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<sup>18</sup> As with Agnew and Flint, we might also note the gendered dimensions of Smith's usage of the term, 'hysteria', and its etymological association with unmanageable female emotion, as opposed to calm masculine logic. Smith empathises with such emotion, though, rather than suggesting that it can be put aside, which perhaps suggests a greater consideration of his own positionality than the previous authors.

procedures; this essay is not an argument against public officials taking measures to try to keep people safe.” (Young, 2003: 11). Like Smith (2001), she then went on to carefully articulate the sexist implications of the war on terror and homeland security. David Harvey et al. (2001: 901), too, stated that, “We share the sense of shock, outrage, sadness and anger felt in New York and Washington, around the country, and across the globe.” For me, these are more reflective accounts of security measures that consider their own necessarily emotional reactions to 9/11 and that are careful to avoid bias in their accounts simply because terms such as ‘US foreign policy’, ‘George W. Bush’, or ‘homeland security’ are sometimes loaded in their academic usage. They are, in short, accounts that this thesis seeks to follow in tone and approach. It offers a critical account of the HSAS, but one that recognises the necessity for national security in some form, too.

This is not to condone, though, the viewpoints of those that in the wake of 9/11 have emerged as uncritical apologists for America and its various security policies. In 2009, for example, *The Times*’ foreign correspondent, Bronwen Maddox, released the short book, *In defence of America*, in which the Iraq War was summarised as, “stupid, but not malign”; a conclusion that could be derived from the “dinner tables of political London, Paris, and Washington” (Maddox, 2009: 2), perhaps, where Maddox claimed to have undertaken her research, but probably not the streets of Iraq and Afghanistan, where the war on terror has claimed over 250,000 lives (Burke, 2011). The perennial champion of American power, Niall Ferguson (2009), might be cited as an example of a similar, blinkered approach to the US and its conduct. Nor am I suggesting that, in their automatic support of America, writers like Maddox and Ferguson are the equivalent opposites of those, detailed above, that appear to automatically critique America. The US’ vast military reach and often hegemonic power does make criticism of the country’s security policies necessary; more so than those of Sweden or Canada, for example. In speaking truth to that power, in the oft-quoted expression, they arguably provide a more valuable service than those wishing to perpetuate the militaristic status quo.<sup>19</sup> But at the same time, it seems to me that less reflexively critical accounts of the US and its security policies might also be desirable: if for no other reason than that by making unsupported, generalising claims that America is run by ‘restless cabals’ or the like, fodder is given to those that see a liberal bias in the Western academy (Zipp and Fenwick, 2006); and otherwise important arguments within political geography are obscured because of their perceived ideological overtures (Kelly, 2006).

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<sup>19</sup> Perhaps more cynically, the US is also easier to study than China for many Western academics because its predominant language is English. Certainly, practicalities such as this were part of the reason for this thesis’ focus upon the US.

In the research for this thesis, then, references to a singular ‘US government’ or ‘US’ have not proven to be helpful. When Taylor suggests that ‘we’ (like-minded academics) must respond to the ‘USA’, presumably he does not include in the latter people that have resisted what he considers the aggressive, militaristic policies of that country; such as the artists, activists, and comedians that have been interviewed for this research (see below). Additionally, it is assumed that he does not mean American academics critical of aspects of US foreign policy. So, to whom does he refer? Edward Said’s (2005: 41) suggestion that, “Representations are a form of human economy, in a way, and necessary to life in society”, is instructive. Simply put, it is all but impossible to not occasionally use reductive representations of other people and places. When one says ‘US policy’, one might actually mean ‘the policy favoured and ultimately expedited by particular members of the George W. Bush administration after a series of internal conflicts and discussions’, but the latter expression has obvious practical limitations. At the same time, as Said (2005: 41) continues, just because representations like this may be necessary, “What we must eliminate are systems of representation that carry with them the kind of authority which, to my mind, has been repressive because it doesn’t permit or make room for interventions on the part of those represented.” Said, of course, was especially concerned with how Western intellectuals and officials represented the subaltern (see, for example, Said, 2003), but we might also apply this logic in the opposite direction. What is lost when we think of the ‘USA’ or its government as a singular, monolithic entity? Or when shorthand, simplified representations are favoured over more complex engagements with people and places?

In 2003, James Der Derian authored the article, ‘Decoding *The National Security Strategy of the United States of America*’. In its focus on a particular policy, this thesis sympathises, but Der Derian also considered the NSS in almost complete isolation; without attempting to understand where this representation came from, or why. It was, in Kuus’ (2007: 243) terms, an exhibition of the “methodological emphasis on elite representations” so common in analyses of world politics. In the same paper, Der Derian (2003: 20) claimed that, “The rhetoric of the White House favors and clearly intends to mobilize... moral clarity... against the ambiguities, complexities, and messiness of the current world disorder.” But this statement fails to appreciate that Der Derian’s paper, too, was searching for ‘clarity’ amongst ‘complexities’ by reducing the political conflicts, discussions and negotiations that occurred in the White House at this time (Woodward, 2003; 2004; 2006), to the simple expression, ‘the White House favors’. Similarly, it seems unlikely that one could take a single document from any other entity (a government, a business, a

person) and claim that it, alone, represented that entity entirely. Again, this is not to suggest that, upon occasion, it is not necessary to use shorthand representations like ‘the White House’, and this thesis does so. What the discussion here has attempted to acknowledge is that such categorisations are reductive and thus when they are used, they are used with this problematic in mind. Additionally, it has suggested that with particular respect to America and its security policies, stereotypes are sometimes in play in academic accounts that this thesis seeks to avoid, whilst still remaining critical and cognisant of the author’s own emotions and positionality.

### **3.2 ‘Peopling’ the HSAS story: geopolitics, interviews and elites**

A more detailed discussion of my positionality, premised upon the discussion above and with particular regard to the use of interviews in this research, is made in the next section. First, though, an analysis is conducted of how and for what purpose interviews have been undertaken, as well as their limitations and the roles of those interviewed. The previous chapter demonstrated that whilst there has been some scholarly study of the HSAS, much of this has been concerned with refining the System as a tool of risk communication, rather than its role as a cultural product with its own particular history and geographies. In addition, almost all of this has been dependent upon primary and secondary textual sources, such as government reports, newspapers and official DHS statements (see Martin and Simon, 2008, in particular). Whilst these are important, and are both discussed below and relied upon throughout this thesis, they offer only a particular account of the HSAS. Following Kuus (2007), interviews have been conducted in an attempt to provide a more ‘peopled’ account of homeland security and the HSAS; in keeping with the larger aim of this thesis of nuancing the broad claims that have been made about both. It is my belief that this has enabled a greater appreciation of the System’s origins and endings, which are addressed in the first and last empirical chapters of this thesis, Chapters 4 and 8; as well as its central period of activity, which is the subject of the intervening chapters, Chapters 5, 6 and 7.

The purpose of these interviews, therefore, has been to clarify and elaborate upon those aspects of the HSAS that have been only superficially addressed in published accounts, such as accusations that the System was manipulated for political gain (Chapter 7), and the details of its creation (Chapter 4). In form, they were semi-structured, it being my intention that, “they take a conversational, fluid form, each interview varying according to the interests, experiences and views of the interviewees” (Valentine, 1997: 111). In addition, they have attempted to glean, *inter alia*, an understanding of the governmental labour that went into the System; the

ways that the HSAS was resisted by comedians and others; and how it was commented upon by ‘experts’, including those from both private and governmental think tanks and research organisations. To differentiate between these kinds of people, it is worth recalling the traditional tripartite division of geopolitics: ‘formal’, ‘practical’ and ‘popular’. In Ó Tuathail’s (1996, 1998) definition, formal geopolitics refers to the geopolitical theories produced by ‘intellectuals of statecraft’; practical geopolitics to the actual narratives employed by politicians in their statecraft, such as public speeches; and popular geopolitics to the everyday narratives deployed through popular culture that offer particular geopolitical imaginations to their audiences.

Three points are useful in nuancing these terms. First, it should be noted that the overlap between these categories is significant. As chapter seven describes, Tom Ridge and the DHS attempted to filter their official narratives (practical geopolitics) into Hollywood productions (popular geopolitics), making a sharp divide between the two untenable.<sup>20</sup> A three-part distinction is useful for analytical clarity, then, but any suggestion that these categories are discrete is more difficult to maintain. Second, as Ó Tuathail’s (1998) definition attests, there is still a predilection toward considering geopolitics as a discursive project only; dependent upon speeches, documents and other representations (all of which Ó Tuathail names), but not affects, practices and emotions (which he does not).<sup>21</sup> As the previous chapter details, geopolitics operates not only through representational forms, but also non-representational affects and materials. Third, whilst these three categories are useful as a basic scheme, they omit consideration of other actors that ‘make’ geopolitics and that do not fit neatly into these categories.

With respect to the last of these, Paul Routledge (1998) has described what he calls ‘anti-geopolitics’: practiced by those that oppose dominant or hegemonic geopolitical imaginations or projects.<sup>22</sup> But where, in Ó Tuathail’s division, would such actors be located? Perhaps some might fall under the rubric of popular geopolitics, including those that make subversive films or television shows, but what about protestors, activists and demonstrators? Similarly, what about actors who actually execute, with varying degrees of success and knowledge, the geopolitical imaginations proposed by those employed in practical and formal geopolitics, such as soldiers and bureaucrats, administrators and clerks (Thrift, 2000)? They may not be so easily identified, but

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<sup>20</sup> The overlap between practical geopolitics and popular geopolitics, as it pertains to homeland security, is explored further in Dodds (2010b) and Chapter 7.

<sup>21</sup> Elsewhere, Ó Tuathail (2003) does address some of the affective dimensions of geopolitics, but does not explicitly attempt to situate these within, or expand upon, his earlier tripartite typology.

<sup>22</sup> Presumably, then, writers of ‘critical geopolitics’ are also engaged in anti-geopolitics.



are crucial in the exercise of geopolitical power, too (Thrift, 2000). As well, such a typology fails to recognise the objective assumptions and implicit claims to power of critical geopolitics itself (Smith, 2000). In other words, are not academics themselves involved in the creation of particular forms of geopolitics? Again, we might consider the somatic marker, ‘Huntington’, which refers to an academic who has been explicitly described as an ‘intellectual of statecraft’ (Bialasiewicz, 2006: 703). But if Huntington’s work thus qualifies as formal geopolitics, then why not that of Taylor (2004), described above, whose geopolitical prescriptions may be starkly different from Huntington’s, but attempt to do something similar, i.e. convince others that his specification of the world is correct and should be acted upon accordingly?

Indeed, one of the most intriguing episodes in the HSAS’ history was triggered by an academic, but one who would not normally be considered an ‘intellectual of statecraft’. When psychology PhD student, Robb Willer, published a paper suggesting that there was a correlation between support for President Bush and alterations in the HSAS level, he had no involvement with the government or history of government service, or any other quality in common with an accepted ‘intellectual of statecraft’, such as Samuel Huntington. But at the same time, his was a geopolitical statement and specification that gained significant traction (see Chapter 7). Is an ‘intellectual of statecraft’, then, simply an academic that posits a worldview with which ‘we’ (other academics, such as those informed by critical geopolitics) might disagree? Must an ‘intellectual of statecraft’ be an academic whose arguments are listened to by those within the sphere of practical geopolitics? Where is the line between a ‘critical’ academic (in other words, one who studies intellectuals of statecraft) and an intellectual of statecraft him or herself to be drawn? It seems that we need a broader and more sophisticated definition of those that are involved in the creation, maintenance and critique of geopolitical actions and beliefs, which expands the typology of Ó Tuathail (1998). Other people, including protestors and activists, soldiers and administrators, and those academics with which we might agree, as well as disagree, are also geopolitical actors with agency.

As such, for this research a broad range of interviews has been conducted, which have attempted to flesh out different aspects of the HSAS. A complete list of those interviewed can be found in Appendix 9.2, and they include DHS officials who worked on the HSAS; think-tank analysts who have both commented and testified upon the System; and comedians, artists and activists who have attempted to undermine its security logics and resist some of its imperatives. They also include government administrators, security professionals and academics, all of whom have worked with the System in various ways and, in the case of Robb Willer, have

sometimes become central to its very story. In selecting my interviewees, I have attempted to offer a representative cross-section of the professions that have intersected with the System, using Ó Tuathail's (1998) typology, but supplemented this with the other geopolitical actors that are not currently incorporated within this. Questions have been tailored toward the five key knowledge areas that this thesis seeks to advance, described in the previous chapter: the System's creation; its official evolution and increasing geographical specificity; resistance to the HSAS in satire and popular culture; accusations that it was manipulated for political gain; and the ways in which the System was ultimately dissolved and the legacies that remain.



**Figure 4: George W. Bush and John Fenzel (Fenzel, nd)**

If the categories above encapsulate the broad areas in which my interviewees have worked, and have thus given a guiding principle for selection, then the choice and location of specific persons within these fields has been dependent upon other, occasionally more pragmatic considerations. For example, interviewees have been contacted through one of two fashions: either without or with introduction (snowballing) (Kuus, 2013). One of my first interviewees, John Fenzel, the creator of the HSAS, was traced after having been mentioned in Tom Ridge's (2009: 83) memoirs (Figure 4). Using Fenzel's online social media presence, I was then able to procure an email address, through which positive contact was made and ultimately a

phone number that enabled interview.<sup>23</sup> Online social media have been useful in locating many other interviewees, too, after they were either cited in publications on the HSAS, like Fenzel, or were mentioned in personal conversations and interviews. Tracing interviewees in this fashion demonstrates at least partially the utility of what Duffield (2009) has called, 'journalistic method' in academic research; in that it is dependent upon extemporised solutions to access and non-traditional forms of contact, such as using a person's social media rather than their employer (Duffield, 2009). Just as the previous chapter described the importance of materiality to the HSAS' story, this method demonstrates that non-human actors (computers, screens, telephones) are a vital part of the research process itself, too.

Whilst all of the artists, academics, comedians and think-tank analysts contacted for interview were accessible through this approach, as well as certain ex-government officials like Fenzel, others working within the realms of formal and practical geopolitics were more difficult to contact. Principally, this was because they had no online presence and so I was often reliant upon snowballing and networking in order to contact them. Here, gatekeepers, especially the former DHS officials Randy Beardsworth and Rich Cooper, were extremely helpful; providing contact details for persons that I could not find and for others of whom I was previously unaware. At the same time, snowballing occasionally failed. After attempts to contact Secretary Ridge through his personal assistant proved fruitless, I secured an interview with Ridge's Chief of Staff, Duncan Campbell. Despite Campbell's assistance, though, an occasion could not be found to interview the Secretary. On the day of my interview with the former, Ridge was attending a Second World War memorial service in Normandy, preventing even a brief conversation (given that they worked in the same office, see below).<sup>24</sup> Similarly, it proved extremely difficult to make contact with Mike Byrne (who added colours to the HSAS, and was first mentioned in Ridge's memoirs), not least because the DHS, with over 200,000 employees, has more than one person by this name. In the end, the only way that the correct Mike Byrne could be traced was by contacting each in turn; a 'messy method' (Law, 2003), perhaps, but ultimately a successful one.

The artists, comedians and activists interviewed to provide an 'anti-geopolitical' perspective on the HSAS were usually easier to locate (Routledge, 1998); frequently

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<sup>23</sup> Where possible, interviews have been conducted in person. But given distances involved, even during research in the US, this has sometimes proved impossible. For notations on how interviews have been conducted, see Appendix 9.2.

<sup>24</sup> This was perhaps an ironic reason given that Ridge often talked about homeland security with respect to World War Two (Chapter 4), but upon this occasion respect for World War Two prevented him from talking about homeland security.

being associated with readily contactable organisations, such as protest groups, or maintaining a more substantial online presence, presumably because there is an especial need for persons in such occupations to have a public profile to facilitate their work (the same being true of think tank analysts and academics). Their consultation reflects the importance of those within the field of ‘popular geopolitics’, as defined by Ó Tuathail (1998) above, when expanded to include other forms of resistance, including practices (especially in the case of protestors). Of course, it is important to recognise that, although these are not elites in the sense of government officials, they are not necessarily ‘everyday’ actors either.<sup>25</sup> Their status as successful professionals should not be forgotten, but, either way, they were able to provide alternative opinions on the HSAS that assisted in providing a better cross-section of the different ways that the System has been considered (as detailed in the previous chapter), and that prevented a myopic focus upon elite practices and discourses (Sharp, 1993).

However, if interviews with artists and comedians have attempted to capture the multifariousness of the HSAS and not simply official narratives on the System, this is not to disavow the importance of the elite interviews undertaken with former and current government officials for this research. Whilst the importance of more popular perspectives on geopolitics is justifiably increasing, I do not believe that this should be conflated with the suggestion that the opinions and actions of elites no longer matter. Rather, in Merje Kuus’ (2007, 2008) terms, what is required is a more nuanced and ‘peopled’ account of elites, which focusses not only upon elite discourses and representations in the manner of Ó Tuathail (1998), but the actors that create, enact and perpetuate these discourse and representations, too. As Kuus (2007: 249) continues, “Downplaying individual intent and individual skill can yield too abstract, evanescent, and contextually flat accounts of geopolitics... elites are not a homogenous mob of pundits that imposes such rhetoric.” Thus, rather than increased attention to such viewpoints serving to privilege elites, it assists in the goal of redressing what have been called the objective assumptions of critical geopolitics; assumptions that fail to pay enough attention to particular subjectivities (Smith, 2000).

At the same time, whilst ‘populating’ this account of the HSAS has provided nuance to totalizing accounts of governments and populations, such an approach also has its

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<sup>25</sup> The thoughts of ‘everyday’ citizens on the HSAS, though, have been possible to gauge through several surveys and studies conducted on the System; work that is considered in Chapters 6 and 7, which look at the racial implications of the HSAS and its ability to affect people, respectively. They also testify to the importance of noting that for some American citizens, the HSAS was not known about at all.

own limitations. By focusing on certain persons within the HSAS story, there is a danger that wider claims – about the politics and ethics of homeland security, for example – might become more difficult to make. To ameliorate this, I have attempted throughout the thesis to move between scales; to show the differing effects that the HSAS had at various levels, despite the well-laid plans (or otherwise) of individuals within its story. For example, Chapter 4 describes the bureaucratic process behind the creation of the HSAS and the intentions of its creators, but Chapter 5 shows how the System at a broader scale (state and national levels) was far less efficacious than these individuals intended. In this way, I have attempted to show that whilst focusing on individuals might provide more ‘peopled’ accounts of homeland security, we must still use broader-brush conceptualisations of the HSAS and how it functioned upon occasion; not least for the provision of greater analytical purchase. Without these, the individual accounts drawn upon here would remain contextually flat; without an appreciation that these actors were still part of a wider bureaucratic apparatus, which had political effects that cannot be reduced to the individual level.



1. Capitol Building: location of congressional hearings on the HSAS in 2004
2. Catalyst Partners: think tank and location of interview with Randy Beardsworth
3. Constitution Hall: venue for the unveiling of the HSAS
4. George Washington University: venue for the announcement of the HSAS’ cessation
5. GAO: location of interviews with Debra Sebastian and William Jenkins
6. Jefferson Building, Library of Congress: author’s workplace during research
7. CRS, Library of Congress: location of interview with Shawn Reese

8. Ridge Global: location of interview with Duncan Campbell
9. US Chamber of Commerce: location of interview with Rich Cooper
10. White House: the original site of the OHS and location of HSC meetings

**Figure 5: Map of Washington, DC (Google Maps, 2013)**

The consultation of elite interviewees was furthered by a period of research at the Library of Congress, Washington, DC, during the spring of 2012, where the majority of those interviewed were located. Principally, this was because even if officials were no longer in government service, they had transitioned into consultancy and think tank work as part of what Morrissey (2011a: 436) has called ‘the military-strategic studies complex’: “a powerful, well-funded assemblage of policy institutes, military colleges and university departments... located in and around Washington, DC and northern Virginia”.<sup>26</sup> Thus, like many of the decisions and events that punctuated the HSAS story (see Chapters 4 and 5, in particular), the research for this thesis has been predicated upon the geographies of the US capital and its environs (see below) (Figure 5). Given time and resource constraints, it was not possible to broaden the research beyond this location in person. As such, first-hand research of people and places that, whilst outside of Washington, were still important to the HSAS’ history, such as the first states (Hawaii and Utah) to dissent from the federally suggested level (Chapter 5), was inhibited. To accommodate for this omission, telephone interviews were conducted where possible, such as that with Scott Behunin (2012, interview): a homeland security official from Utah. The centrality of Washington to the HSAS’ story, though, especially its creation, evolution and dissolution, made a period of residence in this city of particular efficacy to the research.

### **3.3 An Englishman in Washington: reflections upon positionality**

The underlying approach of this thesis has been to avoid prejudgments of the ‘US’ or the various actors within its government that were responsible for the creation and maintenance of the HSAS. To expedite this, I have attempted to remain aware of my own emotional responses to those that I interviewed and my positionality more broadly, in contrast to the accounts of those discussed in the first section of this chapter. As Rose (2007: 136) has suggested, with regard to research in human geography, “Frequently now, it is assumed that before the results of a piece of

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<sup>26</sup> Morrissey’s (2011a) term is based upon a remark in President Eisenhower’s (1961) farewell address, in which the President stated that, “we must guard against the acquisition of unwarranted influence, whether sought or unsought, by the military-industrial complex.” The interlinking of organisations such as those Morrissey lists suggests that, at least in part, Eisenhower’s warning has come to fruition (see, too, Der Derian, 2001, and Turse, 2009, whose work is drawn upon later in this thesis).

research can be presented, the author must explain how their social position has affected what they found”. Or, in Antonio Gramsci’s (1971: 324) terms, “The starting point of critical elaboration is the consciousness of what one really is, and ‘knowing thyself’ as a product of the historical processes to date, which has deposited in you an infinity of traces, without leaving an inventory.”<sup>27</sup> No researcher can do more than offer a brief overview of those traces that they think are most relevant: a partial inventory, in many ways. In the case of my research, I believe that three personal qualities were of particular importance in shaping my findings, which will be discussed in order: my appearance, my nationality and the manner of my introduction to interviewees.

For the record, I am male, heterosexual and in my mid-20s; qualities mentioned only because they inflected my research in particular ways. For example, some of my interviewees – often current or ex-government officials, uniformly male – were kind enough to invite me for drinks to continue our discussions at a date after our initial interview. During such discussions, which were relaxed and convivial, conversation often turned to personal matters such as relationships. These conversations, though informal, were of much use in expanding my knowledge of these interviewees as people, rather than a “homogenous mob”, in Kuus’ terms (2007: 249), and in building networks and opportunities for future research. During one conversation, an interviewee emailed introductions to other potential interviewees whilst we sat and drank and talked; during another, I was invited to a dinner that security professionals were attending later in the month. If interviews represent particular ‘points’ during this research, then the connections between them were often expedited by informal discussions. And it is no personal reflection upon my interviewees to suggest that, had the research been conducted by a woman, continuing discussion alone over drinks might have resulted in a markedly different dynamic, given Western societal norms over what such drinks might symbolise (romantic interest, most obviously). Similarly, when discussing relationships the assumption made by my interviewees was that I was heterosexual and conversation proceeded accordingly. Jasbir Puar (2006) has traced heteronormativities in the war on terror and homeland security (and her work is discussed elsewhere in this thesis), and it should be noted that heteronormative conventions are not simply present in that which is being researched, but the research process, too.

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<sup>27</sup> Thus, as Said (2003: 25) has noted, “it is imperative at the outset to compile such an inventory”; a line that Said has translated from Gramsci’s original text, but is not included in the 1971 translation.

In the context of research in Bangladesh, Sultana (2007) has also described how social position, such as the particular region or nation that one is from, can be vital in either expediting or inhibiting research. Thus, Sultana (2007) reflects upon the fact that when researching in rural Bangladeshi villages, being a ‘deshi’ (a Bangladeshi living abroad) presented particular methodological challenges. Whilst the oft-quoted ‘special relationship’ between Britain and the US, particularly with regard to security issues, can seem overstated, it should be noted that perhaps an Iranian or Syrian PhD student might have been given a different reception by current and former government officials; not negative necessarily, but perhaps more circumspect.<sup>28</sup> Homeland security policy, after all, is intimately connected to the state protection of information (Aradau and van Munster, 2007), and occasionally the targeting of particular nationalities, as the previous chapter attests. On the other hand, my being British was no ‘free pass’, enabling unfettered access to government buildings and staff across Washington. To enter the offices of the GAO, for example, where I interviewed two homeland security specialists, William Jenkins and Debra Sebastian, I was required to fill out several forms, including passport information.<sup>29</sup> Meehan et al. (2013: 1) have argued that, “objects themselves are central to the production, organization, and performance of state power”, and here the negotiation of inanimate matter such as forms, passports and photocopiers, in many ways emblematic of the materiality of statecraft, was required for access to those performing state power.

In addition to my appearance and nationality, my manner of introduction to interviewees also positioned me in certain ways. During my research I had three interrelated identities: a PhD student at the University of London; a researcher at the Library of Congress; and, in those cases where I was recommended by one interviewee to another, a ‘friend of a friend’. The first was available to me always, the other two were only applicable during my research in Washington, and they inflected the interview process and my positionality in several ways. Curiosity, for example, was perhaps the most common response when I introduced myself through the first of these; with respondents wondering why a British student would be interested in studying an American topic. This often appeared to benefit the interview that followed, as it provided a starting point for conversation: concerning the differences between American and British culture, for example. Whilst at the Library of Congress, I was also provided with an email address that was affixed with a

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<sup>28</sup> In that both of these countries are currently involved in ongoing diplomatic disputes with the US over human rights abuses and other issues of national security concern to the US, including Iran’s nascent nuclear weapons programme.

<sup>29</sup> This entry process may have been assisted by the fact that my visa for the US was sponsored by the Library of Congress, which is within the legislative branch of the US government (Lopez, 2012, interview), thus I was in possession of a government visa code.



government domain name (.gov). This allowed for correspondence with interviewees to be initiated as a researcher at a US government institution and may also have assisted in verifying my credentials as a serious researcher. At the same time, it raised positionality considerations, in that it meant that interviewees might assume prior to interview that I was an American. To ameliorate this particular issue, I began interviews by briefly explaining to my interviewees the purpose of my research and making it clear the home institution at which I was based (the University of London); an explanation aided by my accent.

Other ethical issues, though, were more challenging. Perhaps the overriding ethical and methodological challenge encountered revolved around the nature of the topic being addressed: a policy of homeland security. Whilst all but one of my interviews occurred after the HSAS had been replaced, certain interviewees, especially those currently in government, were still reticent to talk about a recent policy that had at least some overlap with national security concerns.<sup>30</sup> For example, some considered certain aspects of the System classified (e.g. the methodology behind the determination of its levels, see Chapter 5), or were unwilling to discuss more controversial dimensions of the HSAS (e.g. accusations that it had been manipulated for political gain, see Chapter 7). Others, particularly serving DHS officials, simply ignored my attempts at contact. A series of calls and emails to the DHS (March, 2012) were uniformly ignored, or the information provided about both the HSAS and its replacement was brief, perfunctory and already existent in the public domain. Whilst at the Library of Congress, a government institution, it was also possible to forward inquiries through the DHS' Congressional Liaison Office (April, 2012), but this avenue was equally unsuccessful. Again, we might cite Law (2003), who suggests that research methods in the social sciences are marked as often by failure as success. Having said this, I would refine this assertion to suggest that even when 'failing' to procure the data that one might wish, other data can be revealed. That some government officials were willing to discuss the HSAS and others were not, for example, further supports the notion that the 'governance' of homeland security policy is multifarious and conflicted, rather than uniform.

With reference to my interviews more generally, I also attempted throughout the research process to guard against the possibility that my positive personal disposition toward certain interviewees might become uncritical appraisal of their actions with respect to the HSAS and homeland security. In other words, I have tried to ensure that my interviewees, whilst often kind and generous to me on a personal level, have

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<sup>30</sup> Indeed, this might be one of the reasons that my first interviewee wished to remain anonymous (see Appendix 9.2 for further information).

still been critically emplaced within the wider systems of governmental power of which they have been a part; systems of power that have not always had kind and generous effects upon everyone, including certain members of the American population. For example, in Chapter 6, the racist and sexist aspects of the HSAS are explored; an important dimension of the HSAS story, which can be traced in part to the decisions taken by the System's creators during the design process. At the same time, determining the responsibility of the HSAS' creators for such aspects is not straightforward. Certainly, I do not wish to avow that the creators are, because of the System's particular effects in this regard, racist and sexist themselves; there is no evidence for such a claim. However, the creators of the HSAS must bear at least some responsibility for such effects, even if they were unintentional. In this case, to avoid depoliticizing either the HSAS or the actions of its creators, I have drawn attention to the highly political and contentious dimensions of the System throughout the thesis. As well, by contextualizing the HSAS within wider, controversial policies of the war on terror – such as the USA PATRIOT Act (see Chapter 4) – I have tried to show how the HSAS became enmeshed within wider systems of governmental power, with their own highly political objectives.

Elsewhere, the slippages and disjunctures within what might be called homeland security's geographical nexus of power/ knowledge (Hannah, 2006), as manifested through the differing institutions described here, were apparent. Some officials, for example, had knowledge but were unwilling to share; others declared the power to restrict the knowledge of their colleagues. Thus, the borders between classified and unclassified information were often ambiguous; tightly policed by some, but unnoticed by others. Whilst some interviewees explained that particular topics were off-limits, it was possible to have in-depth conversations about the same with other US officials. Other interviewees forbade the consultation of colleagues in the same agency. In one particular case, a government representative, who preferred to remain anonymous, suggested that a colleague of theirs should not be consulted. No reason was given for such reticence other than that we were discussing a policy of homeland security and the respondent was clearly unaware that I had already interviewed the person to whom they were referring. As Müller (2011: 2) contends, in critical geopolitics organisations are often considered from the outside, “as producers of geopolitical representations or as geopolitical actors.” Kuus (2013: 118), for instance, has suggested that, “Bureaucracies are designed to guard information... They operate through carefully calibrated codes of secrecy enforced through security clearances.” But who is this ‘they’? As the example above demonstrates, bureaucracies are often marked by internal inconsistencies between employees as to what can and cannot be discussed with the public (Müller, 2011), even within the same agency.

Given the differences in the willingness of officials to talk about the HSAS, the limits set on what might be considered sensitive topics or otherwise were often difficult to determine. If one respondent thought a particular discussion topic too sensitive to discuss, for example, should I have stopped asking other interviewees questions pertaining to the same? During my research, I took the approach that my interviewees were all adults, none of whom were vulnerable according to any common sense definition of that word, and treated them as such. As Valentine (2005: 485) suggests, there is a danger that in construing ethical practice as nothing more than the adherence to certain rules, informants are cast as all but victims, “[denied] the opportunity to evaluate for themselves what is in their own best interests and whether they wish to participate.” As such, all interviewees have been considered the ultimate arbiter of whether the information that they provided was sensitive or not, and if they have been willing to talk about a particular issue then this thesis is willing to do so, too. In informing respondents that these interviews were for the purpose of a PhD thesis at the outset, interviewees were advised that anything said might be accessible to others in the future, which provided a firm grounding for them to provide informed consent (Vujakovic and Bullard, 2001).

At the same time, it quickly became apparent that not only did the borders between what could and could not be talked about shift, but that they were also marked by differing degrees of permeability. Thus, some officials were willing to discuss more controversial dimensions of the HSAS as long as the interviews remained ‘off the record’ (i.e. on the condition that they would not appear, in any form, in the final thesis).<sup>31</sup> If informed consent is one of two pressing considerations in ethical research, as above, then anonymity for respondents is the other (Vujakovic and Bullard, 2001). For example, a person wishing to be identified as a ‘White House insider’ was uncomfortable naming who they thought might have been involved in the political manipulation of the HSAS, but was willing to state that the person ‘had the same number of letters in his first name as his last’. When the discussion continued as if this was Bush’s political advisor, Karl Rove, no correction was made, and conversation proceeded fruitfully (for further discussion of this claim’s accuracy, see Chapter 7). Thus, the intention throughout has been to prevent harm to my interviewees, perhaps the most important overall requirement of ethical research (Elwood, 2007), within which informed consent and anonymity can be situated; whether this harm be defined as jeopardising the relationship of the interviewee with others, such as in the example above involving Rove, or for any other reason.

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<sup>31</sup> To facilitate accurate recollection, interviews were recorded where possible and shared with respondents if they wished. These transcripts are provided in Appendix 9.4.



**Figure 6: The headquarters of Ridge Global (Google Maps, 2013)**

In addition to reflecting upon my positionality and the ethical considerations that I have negotiated during this research, I would like to finish by describing how the practice of interview research itself, not just the comments of the persons being ‘researched’, has also helped to shape this thesis’ conception of homeland security. One particular example demonstrates both how data can be gleaned from situations that might otherwise be considered ‘failures’ (Law, 2003), as well as this thesis’ central conceit that conceptions of homeland security might benefit from greater nuance. As mentioned, it ultimately proved impossible to interview Tom Ridge himself, but I was able to interview Ridge’s Chief of Staff, Duncan Campbell, at the offices of Ridge Global: a security consultancy that Ridge created after leaving government service (Ridge Global, 2012). Whilst the interview with Campbell himself provided greater texture to various aspects of the HSAS story (and is used throughout this thesis), actually visiting Ridge Global was also instructive: not least in refining Louise Amoore’s (2009a: 50) suggestion that Ridge’s creation of this particular organisation, “illustrates an emerging geography of securitization in everyday life.”

This statement is another example, I think, of the kinds of claims made by some theorists about homeland security and the war on terror, discussed in the previous chapter; claims that often fail to capture the nuance of the practices that actually occur under these umbrella terms. In what ways, exactly, does Ridge Global intersect with ‘everyday life’ and thus emblematises ‘an emerging geography’? In fact, Ridge

Global's suite of offices is extremely modest, taking up one corner section of a small floor in a standard downtown DC office building. From the street outside, it is all but invisible (Figure 6). Certainly, Ridge Global is not 'everyday' in the sense that it is obvious to people going about their everyday lives; even those walking past the entrance to its communal lobby, let alone people in other areas of DC, or other cities, or other countries. Neither does this invisibility somehow mask the organisation's influence on people's everyday lives through other registers. Ridge Global's stated objectives attest to just the opposite, with its remit being to provide consultancy to multinational corporations and national governments through a combined staff of less than twenty (Ridge Global, 2013). Whilst it is important to offer wider reflections where possible to avoid provincial analysis, speculative extrapolation on what homeland security 'is' can be tenuous; and in this regard, this thesis attempts to be circumspect.

### **3.4 The geopolitics of the broken link: a critique of online archives**

In the same way that there was no stable category of 'interviewee' for this research, there was no stable archive for the HSAS, either digital or physical. No dedicated collection or even reference to the HSAS was found at the Library of Congress or the National Archives and Records Administration (NARA) during research in Washington, nor were archivists at these institutions able to offer any suggestions as to where such might be found; other than speculation that materials pertaining to the System might still be in transition from the DHS to themselves (but this could not be confirmed). More specific archives, such as the Center for Homeland Defense and Security, the Department of Homeland Security Library, the George W. Bush White House Archives, the Government Printing Office, the Homeland Security Digital Library, Open CRS (Congressional Research Service) and the White House Homeland Security Archive, were more productive, but their collections were still sparse, and limited to digital documentation (photographic and textual) that was often available more widely on the Internet, such as CRS and GAO reports, political speeches and the proceedings of congressional hearings.

Despite there being no 'cache' of HSAS material culture, aspects of the System were still apparent across the American landscape, attesting again to the importance of materials and objects in the practice of statecraft (Meehan et al., 2013). For example, the HSAS' replacement, the NTAS, was displayed prominently at airports transited during the research period, including JFK in New York and Dulles in Washington,

DC.<sup>32</sup> Similarly, an adaptation of the HSAS specifically for naval installations, MARSEC (Maritime Security), was in use at the Whitehall Terminal for the Staten Island Ferry in Manhattan, amongst other places (Chapter 8). Private signage companies, including Accuform and Emedco, also retained stocks of posters and signs featuring the HSAS (Chapter 5). In addition, observations were made of the UK system, 'UK Threat Levels', when conducting research at the UK Ministry of Defence on Whitehall, London (Chapter 8). However, attesting to the state control of what citizens can and cannot see (and what they are and are not shown) (MacDonald, Dodds and Hughes, 2010), whilst photographic documentation could be made of MARSEC, it was forbidden at American airports and the Ministry of Defence. The material archive of the HSAS, then, is partial, and contingent upon the kinds of security practices that it was incorporated within itself. Simultaneously, it is one with its own geographies, in which certain sites are more accessible than others and certain spaces more conducive to research.

Given this, the majority of publicly accessible information on the HSAS is online, in the form of: scholarly articles discussed in the previous chapter; documents available from the digital archives listed above; the DHS' own website; and the online presences of academics, think tanks and protest groups, amongst others. We might compare the availability of this information and the material vestiges of the HSAS, to the difficulty in acquiring data through elite interviews. As this thesis will explore, the HSAS existed and was practiced through both elite, official channels and more popular, everyday media. In discussing the everyday qualities of homeland security policy, including the HSAS, Katz (2007) has coined the term, 'banal terrorism': "sutured to – and secured in – the performance of security in the everyday environment." Perhaps given Katz's emphasis on security practices countering terrorism rather than terrorism itself, 'banal counterterrorism' might be a more appropriate term, but either way Katz's argument encourages consideration of the non-elite practices of policies such as the HSAS, as well as the reverse (see Dodds, 2006). In aggregate, most of the publicly accessible information on the HSAS exists in exactly such banal locations as the Internet; the negotiation of which is part of everyday life for many people; at least in technologically developed countries such as the US (Goodchild, 2007).

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<sup>32</sup> Such transit, though, did not always proceed smoothly. Attesting to the intersection of homeland security practice with the research process itself, I was detained for several hours at New York's JFK airport upon arrival in March, 2012, for various bureaucratic reasons pertaining to my visa. Ironically, given that border protection falls under the jurisdiction of the DHS, I was detained and questioned by DHS officials.

At the same time, a resource such as the Internet, especially because of its importance here, needs to be problematised. As the statement above suggests, “While a growing fraction of citizens in developed countries have such access [to the Internet], it is largely unavailable to the majority of the world’s population who live in developing countries.” (Goodchild, 2007: 220). The United Nation’s International Telecommunications Union recently celebrated the fact that, for the first time in history, the number of Internet users worldwide had reached two billion (Number of Internet users, 2011); implying that the Internet would increasingly become a universal entity, available and beneficial to all. But such assertions also serve to mask the geographical inequalities of the Internet and are, in many ways, reminiscent of earlier claims regarding globalisation. In response to the Boosterist narratives that marked the advent of the latter in the 1990s, for example, Massey (1994) noted that for certain places, such as the Pitcairn Islands, the effects of globalization were far from simple or uniformly positive; rather, globalisation was marked by the disintegration, as well as integration of social networks. In the case of the Internet, access is variegated by state control, too. Thus, “the internet a user connects to and experiences in Canada is far different than an internet user experiences in Iran, China, or Belarus” (Deibert, 2009: 323); in what Deibert (2009) has called, ‘the geopolitics of internet control’.<sup>33</sup>

Moreover, it is not only within countries with well-known policies of information control and suppression that the Internet is a problematic resource. Two instances from my own research demonstrate the inconsistency of Internet resources within the West, too; albeit on a lesser scale than the suppression of information in countries such as China. First, the Homeland Security Digital Library, operated by the Naval Postgraduate School Center for Homeland Defense and Security in Monterey, California, refused the author permission to their full collections.<sup>34</sup> Despite falling into the category, ‘homeland security researchers and academics’, which is one of their stated criteria for access, I was not an American citizen and was barred accordingly (Homeland Security Digital Library, 2013). Morrissey (2011a) has cited the Naval Postgraduate School specifically as part of what he terms ‘the military-strategies complex’, suggesting that the School is concerned with “the scripting of

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<sup>33</sup> We might also consider the private, as well as public control of online information. Despite the elegant aesthetic simplicity of the search engine, Google, for example, the results provided through this website depend upon algorithms that are closely guarded secrets, and which foreground certain pages for commercial reasons (Google, 2013). Search engines cannot be avoided, but the differences in their results are considered in Chapter 6, which examines how differing quantities of satirical HSAS images were returned, according to search engine.

<sup>34</sup> This institution, and the theses pertaining to the HSAS that were published there, are discussed in greater detail in the previous chapter.

strategic knowledge” (Morrissey, 2011a). Certainly, in collecting perhaps the preeminent collection of homeland security resources and then imposing restrictions on foreign nationals (even those that can prove their credentials and the applicability of the Homeland Security Digital Library to their research), the School is acting to script knowledge; allowing access to those concerned with, as Morrissey (2011a: 440) continues, “[the] production of actionable military intelligence”, but perhaps not those with a more critical agenda.<sup>35</sup>

Second, in perhaps an even more ‘everyday’ example of the limitations imposed by international copyright laws, when attempting to view episodes of the television series, *The Daily Show with Jon Stewart*, which frequently commented upon the HSAS (Stewart and O’Neil, 2001; 2002; 2003a; 2003b; 2003c; 2003d; 2004; 2005a; 2005b; 2009), UK visitors to the show’s website (<http://www.thedailyshow.com/>) are informed that videos cannot be watched from this territory. Such videos were available to view when the author was present in the US, of course, and in conjunction with the Library of Congress’ extensive video collection, thus this restriction was not a limitation on the research. But it does demonstrate some of the inconsistencies within the HSAS’ online archive; obstacles that attest to the impossibility of seeing the Internet as either a global, or globally accessible, resource. As Deibert (2009: 324) continues, “While it is true that there is no single node through which all traffic passes on the internet and thus no form of centralized control, there are thousands of nodes that parse out and filter information and act as gateways.” It is partly the materiality of the Internet’s geographies, then, that results in the compartmentalisation and restriction of its virtual data.



**Figure 7: An example of a DHS broken link**

<sup>35</sup> At the same time, the influence of this School on government practice is questionable, as the previous chapter attests.



In addition, whilst there have been issues in this research with regard to initial access to online information about the HSAS, there have also been problems with reaccessing the same. In 2003, as the Internet was becoming an increasingly important part of the academic research process, Dellavalle et al. (2003: 787) warned that, “unlike hard copy references, Internet references may change and become inaccessible”. For this research, much information was gleaned from the DHS’ official website (<http://www.dhs.gov/>), but this has proved a slippery and mutable resource; suggesting that the problems that Dellavalle et al. (2003) warned of a decade ago have not been ameliorated in the meantime. During the start of the research in 2011, for example, the DHS’ website hosted a large archive of information on the HSAS, including press statements accompanying its implementation and a complete catalogue of explanations for why each advisory was issued (discussed further in Chapter 5). By 2013, though, this had been removed and visitors were greeted with an error message (Figure 7); with only a brief chronology of the System and some archived material on the process that ultimately removed the HSAS remaining (DHS, 2009c; 2009d, respectively). Like the HSAS itself, which represents the threat of terrorism but refuses to disclose too much of the procedure behind its determination (Chapter 5), the DHS’ online record of the HSAS both reveals and obscures certain information.<sup>36</sup>

But why might the DHS have wished to remove these records? Certainly, there is no technological explanation. The records contained very few images and no videos at all, thus they would have required only limited server space. The most obvious reason would be that the DHS wanted to deactivate pages pertaining to a defunct System, but given that the HSAS was repealed in early 2011, why did this take so long? Other explanations might be that the HSAS, as the remainder of this thesis will demonstrate, was an unpopular policy with many and so the new administration wanted to distance itself from it accordingly; or that they did not want information available about a system that conflicted with its replacement: the NTAS. Again, though, we might ask why, if this was the case, any pages related to the HSAS are left on the website at all? Perhaps these few remaining pages were retained purely to provide context to the other materials that described why the HSAS had been repealed (DHS, 2009a; 2009d). Certainly, the complete removal of the majority of online HSAS material by the DHS demonstrates that, in the age of the Internet, the

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<sup>36</sup> This mirrors the fact that, in the immediate aftermath of 9/11, many federal agencies removed online data and information, particular geospatial, because of the possibility that it could be used by terrorists to target particular locations and facilities (Baker et al., 2004).

ability of states to remove details of failed policies from the historical record (or, at least, attempt to do so) can be as easy as pressing 'delete'. No record of these pages, for example, has been found through archival services, including the Internet Archive, the biggest of its kind (Thelwall and Vaughan, 2004), and the Cyber Cemetery: a programme run by the University of North Texas to record defunct US government websites. Online archives might degrade in different ways from physical archives, but they still degrade.<sup>37</sup>

If accessing and reaccessing the HSAS' online data have been two of the most pressing methodological challenges with respect to researching the System online, the most significant other, in my opinion, has been appraising the quality of the information that has been procured through this medium. In attempting to acquire an overview of the HSAS' history, for example, online newspapers and other news media have been of use; albeit in particular ways. Reading across some of the leading US broadsheets, including the *The Wall Street Journal*, *The Washington Post* and *The New York Times*, has assisted in understanding how the HSAS changed over time, and their online editions allow for a depth and breadth of search that would not be possible if the textual equivalent had been used.<sup>38</sup> Similarly, online sources, especially those of *The New York Times*, are often revised to correct factual mistakes; revisions that are obviously much more difficult to achieve through printed equivalents. But it should be remembered that the narratives contained within such publications, as with the sources discussed above, are not unproblematic. The example of *The New York Times*, "widely understood as the American 'newspaper of record', the premier source of information for American intellectuals of statecraft, policy analysts, politicians and academics" (Dalby, 1996: 594), is instructive.

Despite *The New York Times*' claim that it publishes, "All the news that's fit to print", the information that it provides is of a particular form and orientation (Dalby, 1996). Thus, Dalby (1996: 593) analysed the paper's coverage of the Rio Summit in 1992 and found that whilst the reporting of the Summit itself seemed accurate, "Notably absent from detailed reportage were matters of the 'alternative summit', the Global Forum, and the concerns of nongovernment organizations and environmental organizations." In effect, anti-geopolitical agendas were marginalised (Dalby, 1996). More recently, the paper has apologised for its coverage of the initial phases of the Iraq War,

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<sup>37</sup> Fortunately, to insure against the possibility that the DHS' online HSAS records might be removed, detailed notes were made by the author on all of them prior to their removal.

<sup>38</sup> A search for one, particular article in *The Times of India* using the Library of Congress' micro-fiche record, for example, took many hours and was ultimately unsuccessful. In contrast, using the search facilities of online newspapers allows for a greater quantity of sources to be analysed.

suggesting that, “In some cases, information that was controversial then, and seems questionable now, was insufficiently qualified or allowed to stand unchallenged” (The Times and Iraq, 2004). As in 1992, official narratives were foregrounded, with relatively less attention given to alternative perspectives (The Times and Iraq, 2004). Moreover, as with any newspaper, *The New York Times* appears to possess a particular partisan agenda, demonstrated by the fact that its editorial has endorsed a Democratic candidate for president every year since President Eisenhower in 1956 (New York Times endorsements, 2012). Online journalism such as *The New York Times* is useful, then, in gleaning further information and ideas on the HSAS, but it is with these caveats that this source is used in this thesis.

At the same time, it is important to stress that online sources are not necessarily of lesser quality than other materials, including academic papers. Tara Brabazon (2010) has recently lamented the ‘Google Effect’ in scholarship, which she defines as, “the creation of a culture of equivalence between blogs and academic articles”. But Brabazon’s suggestion that the latter is always superior is demonstrably false in the case of the HSAS. Brian Massumi’s (2005: 31) peer-reviewed journal article, ‘Fear (the spectrum said)’, for example, asserts confidently that the System was created by the DHS, which is incorrect; it was actually created by the OHS, as we have seen (HSPD-3, 2002). Yet, a blog post (part of a series) by the person that actually designed the HSAS, John Fenzel, makes no such error (Fenzel, 2008b). Thus, if one wanted to learn about the creation of the HSAS, one would almost certainly find that Fenzel’s blogs are of more use (and certainly more accuracy) than Massumi’s peer-reviewed academic paper; of which this error is but one example. In addition to the medium in which a text is published, then, we must also consider its authorship. During the research for this thesis, sources have not been omitted from consideration purely on the basis that they appeared online, or in non-traditional forms, as Brabazon (2010) condones. Wariness and scepticism have been exercised constantly, upon both online and academic texts.

## **Conclusions**

This chapter has attempted to interlace broader considerations of academic approaches to US security policy, the role of elites in constructing the same, and the benefits and limitations of using the Internet as a source, with specific challenges encountered during research of the HSAS. In keeping with the previous chapter, the one overriding theme throughout has been that metanarratives should be resisted; whether these reduce the Bush administration to a ‘restless cabal’, or suggest that all academic papers are inherently superior to other sources. It has also sought to

acknowledge that certain characteristics, including my appearance, have shaped the research that I was able to conduct in all kinds of ways. To return to John Law (2003: 11), whose insights have been used throughout this chapter, “We need to understand that our methods are always more or less unruly assemblages.” Thus, whilst all methodologies are necessarily partial, the attempt here has been to bring at least one form of order to this unruliness.

## **4. ‘Sir, we will develop a public warning system’: The genesis and implementation of the HSAS**

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As the previous chapters have suggested, overarching conceptions of both homeland security and the HSAS can be used as useful starting points for offering more nuanced accounts of both. The possibility of rehearsing such metanarratives in this chapter, which analyses some of the HSAS’ inspirations and the processes of its creation, is present, too. Thus, it is important to state at the outset that this is just one attempt at providing a historical context to the System, up to and including its implementation. It is based, in part, upon interviews with two of the HSAS’ lead designers – its principal architect, John Fenzel, and the person responsible for adding colours, Mike Byrne – and through these interviews it has been possible to single out those historical antecedents that, in the opinion of both, have been most pertinent to the System’s development. To an extent, then, this chapter is about the HSAS’ design team’s ‘infinity of traces’, in Gramsci’s terms, which led to the System’s creation; giving the chapter an empirical base. At the same time, though, interviews with the HSAS’ designers do not provide one ‘true’ narrative of the System’s design process. As such, this chapter situates its analyses within the wider histories and processes of civil defence, the advent of homeland security and the formation of the DHS, to demonstrate how the HSAS was informed by these, too. It also links the themes discussed here to those of later chapters.

### **4.1 Paul Revere, civil defence and the tenets of risk communication**

In the middle of the night on April 18, 1775, according to the 19<sup>th</sup> century poem by Henry Wadsworth Longfellow, Paul Revere undertook his famous horse ride across Massachusetts (Fischer, 1994). To the American patriots that Revere encountered, he warned that ‘the British are coming’, and encouraged them to take up arms and to do so immediately. Revere’s approach to public warning was simple but effective: it came from a trusted source, it was timely and it had clear instructions (Kirby, 2013). And whilst the story has undoubtedly been embellished somewhat since Revere’s original actions (Kirby, 2013), it is also a useful place to begin to contextualise the HSAS as one of the first American experiences with what might be broadly called, ‘civil defence’. Indeed, John Fenzel (2008d), the creator of the HSAS, has stated his admiration for the minutemen warning systems of this period, and McDermott and Zimbardo (2007), in their critique of the System, have compared the latter to Revere’s approach, too. For McDermott and Zimbardo (2007), the ‘Revere paradigm’

can also be used to explore some of the central tenets of effective 'risk communication' (and see, too, Zimbardo, 2003).

Broadly, risk communication refers to the process of protecting people from a particular threat, or threats, through informing them of both the nature of particular dangers and what corresponding actions, if any, can help expedite their protection (Gray and Ropeik, 2002). Given the oft-quoted first duty of governments to protect their populations, it is most often associated with communication from the former to the latter (Gray and Ropeik, 2002), but can also refer to, for example, the practices of a private employer attempting to safeguard its employees. Within risk communication studies, consensus appears to exist that: "warnings should include the following principles to ensure early, open, and comprehensive dissemination and to allow for informed decisionmaking: (1) communication through multiple methods, (2) timely notification, and (3) specific threat information and guidance on actions to take." (Jenkins and Sebastian, 2004b: 4). Within the first of these, the importance of a trusted source is also often stressed (McDermott and Zimbardo, 2007). The 'Revere paradigm' encompassed all three of these tenets; albeit only partially in the case of the first, given the technological limits of the time.

The Revolutionary War of which the 'Revere paradigm' was a part, then, was an example of an existential threat to the United States' sovereign territory (or rather, that of the Thirteen Colonies) that resulted in the creation of an, admittedly informal and ad-hoc, warning system. And this pattern of causality would be matched with the HSAS in the aftermath of 9/11. It would also be seen in the civil defence warning systems of the Cold War, which were created in response to the threat of nuclear destruction by the Soviet Union, and their predecessors created during WWII. Whilst the HSAS, like homeland security more broadly, is partly emblematic of a break from the Cold War and its associated civil defence practices, there are also several overlaps between the purposes of the earlier and later projects (see Davis, 2007; Garrison, 2006; Johnson, 2005; Miskel, 2008, which are drawn upon later). Here, Cold War civil defence warning systems and their imperatives are focussed upon, in particular, as the most pertinent aspect of that era to this study. The intention is not to provide a comprehensive overview of American warning systems up to the creation of the HSAS, nor to suggest that there exists a singular and linear history that can be traced from the System back to some civil defence antecedent (cf. DHS, 2006). Rather, this is one story of the HSAS' creation, which attempts to show how some of the challenges and purposes of the HSAS were prefigured by earlier attempts at public warning.



**Figure 8: The Smokey Bear system (Janet Weil, 2013, pers. comm.)**

Given this, it is still possible to highlight a particular alert system that directly inspired the HSAS' design and that usefully allows us to reflect upon the emergence of US civil defence efforts. In 1941, the US Office of Civilian Defense was created due to fears that World War Two civilian bombing in Europe might cross the Atlantic (DHS, 2006).<sup>39</sup> Although mainland US cities were never attacked in that conflict, the Japanese had dropped incendiary bombs via balloon on the Pacific North West, hoping to ignite forest fires and thus deplete the US' timber reserves (Morrison, 1989). In response, the Office created the Smokey Bear system (Morrison, 1989). Originally a series of placards and mottos, the system was coupled with a set of five colour-coded levels in 1974, which represented a progressively increasing chance of forest fire (Morrison, 1989) (Figure 8). In order, the colours were green ('low'), blue ('moderate'), yellow ('high'), orange ('very high') and red ('extreme') (National Wildlife Coordinating Group, 2005); an arrangement that inspired the HSAS' identical aesthetic (Byrne, 2012, interview). Thus, not only did the HSAS' design mirror the Smokey Bear system, but both were the products of civilian protection efforts inspired by existential threats, in the manner described above.<sup>40</sup>

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<sup>39</sup> A Council on National Defense had been founded as early as 1919, consisting of several cabinet members, but was primarily concerned with public morale and rallying support for American wars (Andrews, 1985).

<sup>40</sup> The early development of the Smokey Bear system was also partially undertaken by the Wartime Advertising Council (Morrison, 1989), and later this body was replaced by the Ad Council, which contributed to the HSAS' development (Ridge, 2009). The linkages between the two projects are thus highlighted again. The notion of governmental control exemplified by both these agencies is discussed below.



**Figure 9: The Bell and Lights system (AT & T, 1968)**

After the cessation of WWII hostilities, and with the advent of the Cold War, the remit of civilian warning systems altered in many ways. Civil defence agencies, such as the Federal Civil Defense Administration, were no longer concerned with attacks that could cause only limited damage, such as incendiary bombs, but rather all-out nuclear war. President Truman introduced CONELRAD (Control of Electromagnetic Radiation) in 1951, later known as the Emergency Broadcast System and later still the Emergency Alert System, which was designed to warn television and radio listeners of an imminent nuclear attack by interrupting programming for several minutes (Moore, 2006; 2010). It did, as such, conform more readily to the first principle of risk communication, mentioned above: the use of multiple methods to inform the general public. At the same time, the secretive Project East River, in conjunction with Bell Telephone Laboratories, created the 'Bell and Lights' system, introducing colour into American civilian warning systems for the first time (Civil defence, 1952) (Figure 9). Similar to a telephone, dialling 'red' meant that an attack was imminent, 'yellow' that an attack was possible, and 'white' that there was no danger: signals that were then relayed to fire stations, hospitals, radio stations and other key infrastructure (Civil defence, 1952). Upon reception by the relevant local authority, bulbs would



illuminate behind glass of the appropriate colour on a receiving set (Civil defence, 1952).<sup>41</sup>

Bell and Lights, then, had a straightforward purpose that adhered to many of the tenets of risk communication described previously: it precipitated certain actions in the American population (at least, those persons covered by the system) that would attempt to protect them from nuclear attack, such as sheltering; and it gave them a time-scale within which this needed to be achieved (immediately). Moreover, Project East River's involvement in the development of Bell and Lights was indicative of a wider entity and project, which would be echoed by the HSAS' development fifty years later. First, its creation by Bell Laboratories was emblematic of what Eisenhower (1961: 5) would call the 'military-industrial complex' (see previous chapter), with clear parallels to the post-9/11 emergence of a 'homeland-security industry' (Ingram and Dodds, 2011: 89). And second, Project East River was part of what Oakes (1994: 46) has called, "a comprehensive program of emotion management", concerned with creating emotional resilience in the American public (Smith, 1953). This aspect of the civil defence effort was not about public protection, but managing what was called at the time, "the problem of panic" (Grossman, 2002: 478; and see, too, Oakes and Grossman, 1992). Thus, civil defence warning systems were partially about directly saving lives, but also affecting 'populations', and using fear to emphasize the significance of the threat being faced (Lucas, 1996; Oakes, 1994).<sup>42</sup>

Again, the parallels between civil defence and homeland security in this respect have been commented upon previously (see Davis, 2007; Farish, 2008; Farish and Vitale, 2010; McEnaney, 2000), with Farish (2007: 256) noting that both "share a concern with the power (and danger) of psychology"; and Anderson (2010a) stating that with the emergence of "total war" from World War Two onward, Western governments began to more seriously consider how to influence the morale of their domestic populations. As early as 1947, Senator Arthur Vandenberg (R-MI) had famously told President Truman that the way to garner public support for continuous military expenditure was, "to scare hell out of the country" (Ivie, 1999: 570). Project East

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<sup>41</sup> The utility of this particular visual quality, with respect to the HSAS, is discussed below. The origins of the expression 'red alert' are unclear, but the earliest usage that the author has been able to locate is by Allied forces in World War Two to signal an imminent Luftwaffe attack (Craven and Cate, 1955: 109). By the 1960s, it was used in perhaps its most famous iteration, on the television series, *Star Trek* (Roddenberry, 1966). The geopolitics of colour are elaborated upon in greater detail below.

<sup>42</sup> For indicative civil defence documentation of the time that describes the importance of psychologically conditioning the population in this manner, see Janis (1951), Committee on Civil Defense (1964), Security Resources Panel (1957).

River, and the creation of warning systems along its specifications, were arguably part of this and implied that “fear could be *channeled* through... emotion management” (Farish, 2003: 135, emphasis in original). Elsewhere, linking to both the continuing importance of the name ‘Revere’ as a somatic marker within civil defence efforts and the wider effort of which Project East River was a part, a ‘Project Revere’, also undertaken during the early 1950s, “sought to test the effectiveness of leaflets as a ‘weapon of mass communication’” (Pinkerton, Young and Dodds, 2011: 117); dropping such materials over areas of the Pacific North West, where the dangers of Japanese incendiary bombs had first led to the creation of the Smokey Bear system. Thus, accusations that the affectivity of the HSAS was manipulated for political gain have parallels in civil defense (Chapter 7), albeit there appears to have never been such a specific connection between warning systems and electoral advantage.

Indeed, the ability of warning systems to affect populations in certain ways came to the fore again during one of the most famous events of the Cold War, and through a system that was a direct inspiration for the HSAS (Fenzel, 2011, interview). The Cuban Missile Crisis is the closest that the world has come to total nuclear war and it was a crisis exacerbated by, amongst other factors, alert systems (Polmar and Gresham, 2006). Earlier in the Cold War, the Pentagon had established DEFCON (Defense Condition) levels to calibrate military defensive measures and postures prior to a nuclear attack (Sagan, 1985). DEFCON had five levels, with DEFCON 1 meaning that nuclear war was imminent and DEFCON 5 that forces should be at no more than normal readiness (DoD, 2006). On October 22, 1962, “The U.S. military raised its level of Defense Condition from the normal peacetime level of DEFCON 5 to DEFCON 3.” (George, 2003: xiii). Later, and for the only time in history, SAC [Strategic Air Command] raised its alert status to DEFCON 2, one step away from war footing.” (George, 2003: xvi). And the remainder of the crisis, finishing on October 28, was marked by a series of false alerts and warnings (Sagan, 1985).

The alteration of DEFCON levels, though, did not just affect US military security practices and procedures. In declassified recordings, the Kennedy administration discussed the potential effect of the DEFCON level upon the Soviets, with the President fearing that an elevation might appear belligerent and thus increase the chance of nuclear hostilities (May and Zelikow, 2002). For their part, the Soviet Union also appeared to consider the effects of their alerts and, during the Crisis, “did not issue a general [military] alert, apparently for fear of instigating an American preemptive strike.” (George, 2003: xiii). Just like Project East River and Project Revere, then, the affective potential of warning systems was something that had to be

managed by US authorities (Pinkerton, Young and Dodds, 2011) (as well as foreign governments), but in this case because of the influence that it might have on the enemy's psychology, rather than that of the American public. Again, this would exactly presage concerns associated with the HSAS, which homeland security officials stated was partly orientated toward the enemy's psychological security and not just that of the domestic population (Ridge, 2003i), as Chapter 5 discusses.

There are, then, several parallels between the objectives of civil defence and homeland security, and between warning systems from the former and the latter, which this section has reflected upon to contextualize the System's creation. The examples highlighted here have been necessarily brief, and focus where possible on those systems that are known to have had an influence on the HSAS' design, but are elaborated upon at various points throughout this thesis in order to demonstrate that the HSAS was not a completely novel entity upon its introduction in 2002 and had precursors. Perhaps the most pertinent aspect of civil defence to this study was that it introduced colours into public warning systems for the first time – a visual characteristic that, in the case of the HSAS, is discussed in further depth below – and that civil defence warning systems emerged as part of an attempt by US authorities to affect domestic populations, broadly construed, in particular ways. In addition, their consideration here has enabled reflection upon some of the tenets of risk communication, which provides a useful context for understanding how and why many of the DHS' plans for the HSAS ultimately broke down, which is the subject of the next chapter.

At the same time, to suggest that the HSAS was merely a reiteration of previous warning systems, which can be traced unproblematically back to the Cold War (DHS, 2006; Vanderbilt, 2003), ignores the differing purposes and uses to which the HSAS, rather than, for example, the Bell and Lights system, was put. The latter was designed for the Cold War and to respond to the threat of all-out Soviet nuclear attack; the former, for an era in which threats could no longer fit neatly within the 'container' of the state (Taylor, 1994), and small targeted strikes by terrorists needed to be defended against, rather than total war. In addition, the System's creator, John Fenzel (2012, interview), does not mention any particular Cold War system as inspiration, apart from DEFCON, but this was a strictly military apparatus, which was still in use when Fenzel created the HSAS (see below). Whilst consideration of civil defence practices can help to contextualize the HSAS, then, this does not mean that the American experience of civil defence featured prominently in the design process that Fenzel led (discussed below). In other words, the System is not merely a form of Bell and Lights *redux*, or a reiteration of any other warning apparatus. Such a

suggestion overlooks the particular geopolitics and histories of the HSAS' creation, including the shift from Cold War imperatives to those of post-9/11 homeland security.

#### **4.2 The advent of homeland security and the creation of the DHS**

With the end of the Cold War, several new geopolitical frameworks were posited to replace the binary superpower antagonism that had endured for so long (Mead, 2002). During the 1990s, no clear enemy emerged to replace the role of the USSR, but several American theorists marked terrorism as the next major threat, to varying degrees. These included Francis Fukuyama (1992), Samuel Huntington (1993, 1998) and Robert Kaplan (1994, 2000), amongst others (Ó Tuathail and Dalby, 1998); with Huntington's notions concerning the division of the world into ethnic zones of perpetual conflict perhaps seeming the most pertinent in the wake of 9/11 (Mamadouh, 2004), and certainly attracting much attention from academics, as the previous chapter has discussed. As Sharp (1998: 160) noted presciently at the time, "Terrorism has the potential to present the USA with the same scenario of total war as did the Cold War: perpetual vigilance and pre-emptive action are required to combat what is often described as an incessant threat." (Sharp, 1998: 160).<sup>43</sup> Clinton's creation of an office devoted to counterterrorism in 1998 seemed to validate such suggestions, and Sharp's specific prediction of the increasing use of pre-emption directly presaged what has come to be known as the 'Bush Doctrine', as enshrined in the 2002 US National Security Strategy (Kearns, 2009).

At the same time as these reformulations of the geopolitical status quo were being issued, the notion of a 'homeland' was emerging in the spheres of what might be broadly called formal and practical geopolitics, having been first mentioned in the Defense Department's 1997 Quadrennial Defense Review (Capps, 2012, interview). By 2000, the term was firmly ensconced in American security circles and the US Army War College hosted a 'Conference on Homeland Protection' at which former Defense Secretary, John Hamre (2000: 12), stated the importance of "homeland defense". Hamre's call was supported by the Project for a New American Century (PNAC); an influential neoconservative think-tank with members that would later serve under Bush, including I. Lewis Libby and Paul Wolfowitz (Bialasiewicz et al., 2007). PNAC's (1997) statement of principles read much like a manifesto for the future President and in 2000 their first "core mission" for US military forces was

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<sup>43</sup> During the same period, other writers posited terrorism as the primary existential threat to the US, too (e.g. Campbell, 1998; Hardt and Negri, 2000; Sharp, 2000). Islamic terrorism often figured highly in these debates, given that in the opinion of some (Jones and Clarke, 2006; Said, 1997), it represented the West's last great 'other'.

simply entitled, “defend the homeland” (PNAC, 2000). These various references were solidified when, shortly before President Bush came to power, “President Clinton announced plans to boost military spending for a new programme called “Homeland Defense”” (Der Derian, 2001): a term that Bush would use prior to 9/11, too (Daalder and Lindsay, 2003).

References to the ‘homeland’, then, are relatively novel in the American experience (Brigham, 2005), and were part of the reformulation of the US’ place in the world; a reformulation in which terrorism was often given pre-eminence (and some of the meanings of the term, ‘homeland’, are discussed below). And we need to be careful to recognise this lineage. Whilst we might say that, “The *popularization* of “homeland security” followed the successful rendering of the [9/11] terrorist attacks on the World Trade Center and the Pentagon” (Farish, 2008: 99, emphasis added), those attacks did not mark its emergence. The events of 9/11 have, however, undoubtedly increased the saliency of ‘homeland security’, with Ó Tuathail (2003) describing them as a ‘somatic marker’ for many Americans, which has assisted in the movement of domestic security to the top of national security agendas and arguably assisted the Bush administration in facilitating its political agenda (Kellner, 2003a). This ‘somatic marker’ has enabled the Bush administration “to pull off what it would only have dreamed of doing before 9/11”, in Klein’s (2007: 16) opinion, including the dramatic enhancement of domestic security measures and the reformulation of the national security state (Herrera, 2005; Mabee, 2007); a reformulation in which homeland defence has been given priority (Dalby, 2009; Hazbun, 2010).

As part of this shift, planning for a department dedicated to homeland defence was undertaken prior to 9/11, even if those attacks began its development in earnest. President Clinton’s Office of the National Coordinator for Security, Infrastructure Protection and Counter-Terrorism, mentioned previously, provided an early template. And two years later, the (Hart-Rudman) Commission on National Security/21<sup>st</sup> Century (2001: viii), chartered by Defense Secretary William Cohen to provide a road map for US national security priorities, “recommended the creation of an independent National Homeland Security Agency (NHSA) with responsibility for planning, coordinating, and integrating various U.S. governmental activities involved in homeland security”.<sup>44</sup> Its findings were initially ignored, though, by the incoming Bush administration, which lowered the place of terrorism on its national security

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<sup>44</sup> The Advisory Panel to Assess Domestic Response Capabilities for Terrorism Involving Weapons of Mass Destruction (the Gilmore Commission) also published reports stressing the threat of terrorism prior to 9/11, in 1999, 2000 and 2001, but did not recommend the creation of a homeland defence agency, *per se*. These reports are discussed in greater depth in Chapter 5.

agenda, partly because of the ideological predilections of some of its foremost members, including Defense Secretary, Donald Rumsfeld, and Vice-President, Dick Cheney (Clarke, 2004). Despite mentioning “homeland defense” in passing prior to 9/11, “he [Bush] offered no plan for improving what we now call homeland security.” (Daalder and Lindsay, 2003: 40).



**Figure 10: Tom Ridge is introduced to Congress (CNN, 2001b)**

Of course, after 9/11 priorities were reordered and in Bush’s (2001) speech to a Joint Session of Congress on September 20, the president unveiled his plan for a new Office of Homeland Security. The man chosen to head the Office was, in Bush’s (2001) words, “a military veteran, an effective governor, a true patriot, a trusted friend”. “He will lead, oversee and coordinate a comprehensive national strategy to safeguard our country against terrorism, and respond to any attacks that may come.” (Bush, 2001). Tom Ridge was the Governor of Pennsylvania and the first enlisted Vietnam veteran to be elected to Congress (Haulley, 2006; Ridge, 2003e). He and Bush had been close friends from their time as governors together and, as Ridge said, “when your President calls you, you say yes” (Ridge, 2003f); demonstrating the importance of interpersonal communication in expediting homeland security practice, discussed further below. After making Ridge one of his first presidential appointees (Schaffer and Meyer, 2003), the President signed Executive Order 13228 (2001) on October 8, 2001, and the OHS was officially created. Prior to the establishment of the Office, “homeland security activities were spread across more than 40 federal agencies and an estimated 2,000 separate Congressional

appropriations accounts [funding streams]” (Borja, 2008: 3), as well as 90 congressional committees and subcommittees (Fiorina, Peterson, Voss and Johnson, 2007). Bush’s consolidation offered a more united home front in the war against terrorism.



**Figure 11: The Eisenhower Executive Office Building (Author)**

At first, the Office had just five members, “operating from a corner of the Executive Mansion [the White House]” (Fiorina, Peterson, Voss and Johnson, 2007: 285; Schaffer and Meyer, 2003). After nearly nine months operating in such cramped conditions, though, calls were increasing for the OHS to expand, in terms of both its office space and political remit (Fiorina, Peterson, Voss and Johnson, 2007). With respect to the first, the new Office spread into offices in the Eisenhower Executive Office building next door to the White House (Figure 11). “Others worked away from downtown Washington at an OHS security-monitoring center” (Schaffer and Meyer, 2003: 15), and still others filled rooms at the Library of Congress, opposite the Capitol Building (Reese, 2011, interview).<sup>45</sup> These were some of the material geographies of securitisation that enacted, in Mabee’s (2007: 385) formulation, “the institutionalism of [post-9/11] threat response.” Thus, the creation of the OHS

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<sup>45</sup> Currently, a vast new complex is being built for the DHS in South East Washington, DC (General Services Administration, 2013).

supports both Müller's (2011: 4) claim that organisations are central in understanding how certain geopolitical imperatives are realised and his definition of organisations as, "arrangements of human and material elements that work together towards a shared mission." Below, in line with Kuus (2007), the OHS and DHS employees that were involved in the creation of the HSAS are discussed – the 'human elements', in Müller's (2011) terms – but the geographies discussed here illustrate how organisations are dependent upon material elements, too.

With respect to the Office's political remit, Bush initially refused to upgrade the fledgling Office to a full Department (Weisberg, 2008). But the President's thinking on the subject shifted as the full incompetence of his administration with respect to preventing 9/11 began to emerge. President Clinton had designated terrorism "the enemy of our generation" (Bacevich, 2002: 118), but upon taking office Bush and his colleagues – including Rumsfeld, Cheney and Wolfowitz, amongst others – deemphasized its importance: preferring, instead, the state-centric logics instilled in them by their Cold War experience (Clarke, 2005; Gerges, 1999). Warnings of potential Islamist terrorist attacks were ignored in March and July of 2001 (National Commission on Terrorist Attacks upon the United States, 2004), as was the CIA brief, "Bin Ladin determined to strike in US", delivered to the President's desk on August 6 of that year (CIA, 2001). And it has been suggested that many similar memos, stressing the threat of al Qaeda in even starker terms, were seen by the President in the months leading up to 9/11, which remain classified (Eichenwald, 2012). Arguably, then, the upgrade of the OHS to a full federal department was a way for the President to both deflect attention from these failures and respond to these criticisms.

Democrats had been campaigning for the creation of a departmental level homeland security agency since the 9/11 attacks and their proposals gained increasing support during the spring of 2002 (Daalder and Lindsay, 2003). Senator Joe Lieberman (D-CT), Al Gore's running mate in the presidential elections of 2000, had introduced the Lieberman Bill shortly after 9/11, which outlined how a 'department of homeland security' might be created (Borja, 2008), following the Hart-Rudman Commission (2001). Bush, as we have seen, initially rejected such calls, but on June 6, 2002, "On the same day that FBI agent Coleen Rowley testified before Congress on the FBI's missteps [in attempting to uncover the 9/11 plot]" (Daalder and Lindsay, 2003: 95), Bush embraced Lieberman's proposal. As Kellner (2003a: 14) says, "The Bush administration's surprise call on June 6, 2002, for a new cabinet-level Homeland Defense Agency was seen by critics as an attempt to deflect attention from investigations of Bush administration and intelligence failures". In addition, Bush's



proposal, perhaps in an attempt to further deflect such attention, “dwarfed anything being considered on Capitol Hill.” (Daalder and Lindsay, 2003: 95).<sup>46</sup>

The Homeland Security Act became effective on November 25, 2002, after being given Congressional approval: passing 295 to 132 in the House of Representatives, and 90 to 9 in the Senate (Borja, 2008). In the Homeland Security Act’s words, “The primary mission of the Department is to [...] prevent terrorist attacks within the United States.” (*Homeland Security Act*, 2002: 116). And to this end, the Act quoted the US Constitution, stating that, “The Federal Government is required by the Constitution to provide for the common defense, which includes terrorist attack” (*Homeland Security Act*, 2002: 116): a prerogative that would ‘blowback’, in military terms, as it was invoked in the future by state and local authorities wishing to recoup some of the expenses associated with heightened HSAS levels from the federal government (Chapter 5). The Act also appointed a host of secretaries to support Ridge’s work, including a Deputy Secretary, and Under Secretary for Information Analysis and Infrastructure Protection, both of whom would contribute to the development of the HSAS in the future (Reese, 2003); including the determination of the threat level, in the case of the former (Loy, 2012, interview). The Department became effective on January 24, 2003; 60 days after the Homeland Security Act passed the Senate (Borja, 2008).

Numerous descriptions of the size of this bureaucratic undertaking have been made. The DHS is, variously: the largest government department since Defense; the third biggest federal department of all time, after Defense and Veterans Affairs; and “the largest change in the US national security apparatus since the early days of the Cold War” (Kirby, 2013; Hammond, 2008: 221).<sup>47</sup> Indeed, President Bush (2010: 156), in his memoirs, would cite the importance of Cold War predecessors in deciding to create the DHS at all, as well as the National Security Act of 1947 (otherwise most famous for founding the CIA): “I also knew [in considering the creation of the DHS] that there was a successful precedent for restructuring the government in wartime. At the dawn of the Cold War in 1947, President Harry Truman had consolidated the Navy and War departments into a new Department of Defense [with the National Security Act]. His reforms strengthened the military for decades to come.” Given Bush’s initial reticence to create the DHS, this is perhaps a retrospective justification,

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<sup>46</sup> President Bush insisted that the FBI retain its operational independence, though, despite some calls for it to be incorporated within the DHS, too (Klein and Ridge, 2010); presumably because he did not want to infringe upon its operational efficiency.

<sup>47</sup> Technically, it became so only after March 1, 2003, when the TSA, FEMA, Coast Guard, Customs Service and US Secret Service were incorporated into the DHS (Borja, 2008).

but irrespective of this, the DHS today has consolidated 22 federal agencies and employs over 200,000 people (Hidek, 2011).

As such, the DHS' creation has been many things: a modern equivalent of previous civil defence organisations (albeit with the differences in aims and objectives mentioned previously); part of a longer reorientation toward homeland security that began before 9/11, but has been expedited since; and a heavily politicised decision by President Bush to detract attention from other failings. Perhaps most productively with respect to the HSAS, though, the DHS might be understood as emblematic of how, in recent years, many national security agencies have become increasingly concerned with the conception and management of risk (Dodds, 2010b). "In the immediate months following September 11," Louise Amoore (2006: 337) suggests, "the dilemmas of the war on terror were being framed as problems of risk management, clearing the path for a burgeoning homeland security market". Amoore does not say by whom these problems were being framed, but certainly, given the DHS' "primary mission" of preventing terrorist attacks (*Homeland Security Act, 2002*: 116), the Department needed some way to: first, gauge the likelihood of future attacks; and second, as the previous discussion of risk communication suggests, relay this to the public.

Of course, the DHS' approach to the first of these challenges has been extremely controversial. In conjunction with other policies in the war on terror, its methods of security have often infringed upon civil liberties considered inviolable in the US and abroad (Young, 2003).<sup>48</sup> The USA PATRIOT Act, for example, introduced a raft of controversial measures, including the indefinite detention of immigrants; the removal of restrictions on information sharing between law enforcement and national intelligence agencies; and the interception of electronic communications, which entailed dramatic changes to the US Code (*USA PATRIOT Act, 2001*). For its part, the DHS has been accused of employing excessive surveillance (Graham, 2004), and profiling individuals (Mabee, 2007). A focus upon the HSAS, though, does not obscure these aspects of homeland security. As Chapter 2 states (and Chapters 6 and 7 discuss in greater depth), the System is at least partially implicated in Puar and Rai's (2002: 122) formulation of homeland security and counterterrorism as, "a form of racial, civilization knowledge". For the moment, though, the second of these challenges is considered: how the DHS attempted to represent the terrorist threat. To

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<sup>48</sup> USA PATRIOT Act is actually an acronym, "Uniting and Strengthening America by Providing Appropriate Tools Required to Intercept and Obstruct Terrorism" (*USA PATRIOT Act, 2001*), but it is often referred to, problematically, as the Patriot Act. Such semantics arguably made it difficult to vote against, especially during a time of fervent nationalism, and only Senator Russ Feingold (D-WI) dissented.

understand this, as the previous chapter suggests and the next section demonstrates, it is useful to think less through epochal notions such as Beck's (2002) 'risk society' and more through Anderson and Adey's (2011) suggestion that, "security affects emerge from the active, productive, and continual weaving of a multiplicity of bits and pieces." In addition, the remainder of this chapter attests to the efficacy of 'peopling' accounts of geopolitics (Kuus, 2007) (Chapter 3).

#### **4.3 John Fenzel, Mike Byrne and the geopolitics of colour**

On December 3, 2001, John Fenzel was sitting in the press briefing room of the OHS (Ridge, 2009). A Lieutenant Colonel in the US Army Special Forces, Fenzel had been appointed a White House Fellow shortly before 9/11. After those attacks he had been seconded to the OHS as its first Staff Director, to assist Secretary Ridge in pulling together the new organisation. On this particular occasion, Fenzel was watching as Ridge struggled to answer the queries of the assembled reporters, having just issued an abstract warning of a possible terrorist attack. Ridge was, in Fenzel's (2011, interview) words, "visibly frustrated because it was difficult to describe some of these threats in an easily understandable way and without being able to provide the full contexts of those [classified intelligence] briefs [that Ridge was acting upon]". And this sense of unease was communicable. As Ridge (2009: 83) recalls, "Though it was not the perfect vantage point, Fenzel could nevertheless see the frustration etched on my face... [he] watched as I warned the room's occupants and the nation – in typically vague fashion – that another dramatic attack on the country might be just around the corner." In particular, Ridge was unsettled by a question from the media pool that asked whether there was any threat framework that the Secretary could share (Fenzel, 2008b); but at the time, the US government had no public warning system for terrorism (Fenzel, 2011, interview).<sup>49</sup>

After the press conference, Fenzel caught up with Ridge, "[who] walked in uncharacteristic silence through the maze of hallways in the West Wing" (Fenzel, 2008b), and the two sat down in his office (Ridge, 2009). There had to be a better way for the OHS to communicate its opinion of the threat being faced, they both agreed (Ridge, 2009); some way to address then commonplace "complaints from the press and public that there was no way to gauge the relative threat level from day to day." (Sammon, 2002). "Sir, we will develop a public warning system for you," said Fenzel (2011, interview), "It will be a good one, and we'll start on it right away and

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<sup>49</sup> The federal government did have one for its own use, CONPLAN (Concept of Operations Plan), introduced in January, 2001 (Salmons, 2012, interview). Level 4 represented a minimal threat, and Level 1 a WMD incident (USG, 2001). CONPLAN was superseded by the HSAS.

hopefully have it finished for you in a couple of months.” Ridge (2009: 85) recalls this moment in his memoirs and demonstrates the emotional importance of body language in creating a sense of personal security: “I looked him over, this husky and confident soldier [Fenzel], and knew he would deliver.” In emotional geography, embodied accounts of international relations have often focused upon women’s fears, “to counter previous western (and predominately white, middle class, male, adult) discourses” (Pain and Smith, 2008b: 6). But we might also note, through this example, how the insecurity and ‘emotional comforting’ of and between men serves to expedite practices of statecraft, too.

Although there had been no publicly-accessible, nationwide warning system in place on 9/11, various warnings and alerts, including the FBI’s, had been issued (Watson, 2002). For immigration services, the US-Canada border had been placed on “high alert” after the attacks; the DoD had instituted DEFCON-3, for the first time since the 1973 Arab-Israeli War (Clarke, 2004); and the State Department had placed all foreign embassies on “heightened alert” (Rumsfeld, 2011: 344). As Bush would say in his speech to the nation on that day, “Our military at home and around the world is on high alert status and we’ve taken the necessary security precautions to continue the functions of your government.” (CNN, 2001a). Arguably, then, these warnings were important in institutionalizing the ‘alert’ as a part of the expected governmental response to terrorist attacks from 9/11 onward. And some of the major accounts of this period, including Richard Clarke’s (2003), President Bush’s (2010), and Donald Rumsfeld’s (2011), situate their experience of 9/11 within the various warnings that they were receiving at this time from multiple quarters.

Fenzel (2011, interview) also drew inspiration from other systems. The MARSEC system, a portmanteau of “maritime” and “security”, had been employed by the US Coast Guard, technically a branch of the armed services, for some years (Byrne, 2012, interview). MARSEC addressed the threat of terrorist attacks against America’s ports, shipping and other coastal infrastructure, with changes in its level precipitating preplanned scalable responses and mitigation strategies, such as the increased inspection of piers and wharves (Christopher, 2009; McNicholas, 2008; Waldron and Dyer, 2005). Similar, preplanned measures were associated with perhaps the HSAS’ most famous inspiration, DEFCON (Byrne, 2012, interview): a set of five, graduated threat conditions to proscribe the defensive readiness of the US military (see the first section of this chapter), operated in tandem with the military’s other warning systems, including: EMERGCN (Emergency Condition), FPCN (Force Protection Condition), INFOCON (Information Operations Condition), LERTCON (Alert

Condition), REDCON (Readiness Condition) and WATCHCON (Watch Condition), which have slightly differing, but similar purposes (see FAS, 1998).<sup>50</sup>

Whilst these inspirations gave the HSAS its basic multi-level structure, they were not the reason for the inclusion of perhaps its most famous characteristic: colour. This was the decision of Mike Byrne, a Captain in the New York Fire Department during 9/11, who had joined the OHS as Senior Director for Preparedness, Response and Recovery soon after those attacks (Byrne, 2012, interview). Upon arrival at the first HSAS planning discussions, Byrne (2012, interview) recalls that, “everyone [on the design team] wanted numbers”, but that in his opinion, “you’ve really got to add colours.” (Fenzel, 2011, interview). And there were two reasons for this. First, Byrne (2012, interview) recalled that during his previous career, firefighters would rate the injuries of victims encountered on a scale of ‘one’ to ‘three’, for the purposes of triage. The difficulty, however, was that there was no intuitive way for new recruits to know whether ‘one’ was worse than ‘three’, or vice versa. Intuitively, though, ‘red’ was worse than ‘green’ in American society, in a way that ‘one’ was not necessarily worse than ‘five’ (Behkne, 2012; Kreitler and Kreitler, 1972); especially in a country with no official language and a high proportion of non-native English speakers (Gursky, 2006). Second, in addition to Smokey Bear, colour codes were already in use across America; from air quality scales to crisis management in hospitals and schools (Fisher, 2002; Wessel, 2002; Friedman, 2002), and missing person emergencies to weather alerts (Moore and Reese, 2005; Grant, 2007). Colour, then, was already an important method of organising information and actions, familiar to many Americans.

Ridge (2009: 98) himself remarked upon such precedence, recalling that, “colors as alert symbols had been used before... For example, before World War II, the navy worked on War Plan Orange for many years... the code for war with Japan” (see Bell, 1997; Child, 1979). Indeed, colour has had martial applications for hundreds of years, demonstrating this visual quality’s intimate connection to geographical specifications and imperatives (MacDonald, 2011). In the 19<sup>th</sup> century, for example, when Great Britain was the principal antagonist of the US, American maps highlighted the threat

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<sup>50</sup> Ridge (20040) has specifically mentioned the importance of the DoD’s warning systems in the development of the HSAS, as have the secondary analyses of Grant (2007), and Shapiro and Cohen (2007). Cockrum (2008), Hidek (2011) and Kirschner (2006) suggest that the HSAS was modelled upon either FPCON or its predecessor, THREATCON (Threat Condition). Neither Fenzel (2011, interview) nor Byrne (2012, interview) have ascribed such importance to FPCON, though, and the single DoD PowerPoint that Hidek (2006) bases his argument upon (DoD, nd) is ambiguous. Naturally, there are few publications pertaining to the exact guidelines associated with each of these, but for more on REDCON, see US Army (1998), and DEFCON, Schneier (2010) and Sagan (1985).

of British Canada by colour: red, or one of its shades (Chomsky, 2000). During the Cold War, this colour attained particular resonance in US political discourse, with fears of ‘reds under the bed’ helping to legitimize the internalization of danger (Dodds, 2003). The appellation ‘pink’ was also used widely, suggesting a certain proclivity toward communism, with gendered and sexualized connotations (Campbell, 1998). In the 1950s, for example, Richard Nixon (R) denounced his opponent for the California Senate, Helen G. Douglas (D), as “pink right down to her underwear.” (Campbell, 1998: 158). And disputes over the ‘gendering’ of colour would come to the fore again with discussions over the possibility of including white in the HSAS (see below).

In the war on terror, the negotiation and contestation of colour has been important, too. During the run-up to the American-led invasion of Iraq in the spring of 2003, US officials covered Pablo Picasso’s *Guernica*, then hanging at the UN in New York. “Arguing that a more appropriate backdrop was required for press conferences of the war [being given by Secretary of State, Colin Powell], UN officials were told by the state department to cover the art with a blue cloth” (MacDonald, Hughes and Dodds, 2010: 7). The blue was Stettinius Blue, the peaceful emblem of the United Nations, and colour here provided not only a convenient mask to facilitate Powell’s prelude to war, but an ironic counterpoint to the actual purpose of his speech; the blue of nations (supposedly) united actually in the service of a US willing to engage in unilateral military strikes. In a contrary but complementary action, the US delegation also removed colours during their visit. Colin Powell’s PowerPoint to the General Assembly, containing the infamous satellite imagery of Saddam Hussein’s suspected Weapons of Mass Destruction, was originally in colour, before being switched to gray-scale. The blander aesthetic, it was thought, better matched Adlai Stevenson’s similar presentation to the UN in 1962, wherein he revealed Khrushchev’s installation of nuclear missiles in Cuba (Unger, 2007). It was hoped that some of the legitimacy from this earlier presentation would be imparted to Secretary Powell’s through the ‘toning-down’ of colour (Stark and Paravel, 2008; and see, too, Tufte, 2003).

The US’ removal of colour at the UN also points toward a deeper history. MacDonald (2009: 10) has suggested, paraphrasing Jacques Derrida, “that the binary of darkness and light is the founding metaphor of Western philosophy”. In other words, it is not just the HSAS’ particular colours that are of note, but also the fact that the System uses colours at all; that it implicitly associates the revelation of geopolitical truths with light (colour) rather than dark (an absence of colour). Part of the HSAS’ persuasive visual logic was that it quite literally illuminated the terrorist threat. In this sense, whether a certain colour actually corresponded to a terrorist threat or not

was immaterial. Rather, as we have seen, part of the DHS' function was "to rein in the seemingly infinite opportunities for disaster into a matrix of predictable outcomes" (Martin and Simon, 2008: 283), and through its visual aesthetic the HSAS implied that the 'true colours' of terrorism, as it were, could be revealed. Thus, Byrne's inclusion of colour assisted in the original purpose of the HSAS: to help the American public and governments at all levels to cut through the complexity and multiplicity of 'unenlightened' warnings by Ridge and others (Ridge, 2009).

Once colour had been added, there still remained the choice of the level at which the HSAS should initially be set; a decision upon which officials initially disagreed (Bloch-Elkon and Shapiro, 2011), which attests again to the limitations of considering governments as singular entities. Attorney General John Ashcroft suggested that the default be Code Orange, "arguing that we were under siege" (Ridge, 2009: 99), but others favoured Code Blue (Ridge, 2009).<sup>51</sup> Both President Bush and Secretary Ridge favoured Yellow, contending that this best reflected the 'new normal' (Fenzel, 2011, interview). Indeed, 'new normal' was seriously considered as the descriptor for Code Yellow rather than 'elevated' (Fenzel, 2011, interview), presumably reflecting what the Bush administration now felt was the 'average' level of threat to the US and arguably implying that the DHS' actions should be accepted uncritically, too (Martin and Simon, 2008). Setting the level at Yellow also portrayed the current threat as a mid-point; implying that matters could get substantially better or substantially worse. Thus, through colour, the HSAS gave both hope of a better future and helped instil resilience within some (see Chapter 7), but also implicitly reminded the public that safety was not assured (a quality that was arguably exploited by its manipulation for electoral gain).

After Code Yellow had been settled upon as the HSAS' default colour, last revisions were made to the System's coloration. The White House altered the design to make the HSAS appear more three-dimensional by adding black shadow to the sides of its coloured blocks (Fenzel, 2011, interview) (Figure 1). The reason why is unclear, but this change did have an important effect. In making the HSAS 3-D, the White House made the image 'clickable': crucial for giving online buttons "pressing affordance", i.e. encouraging persons to click upon them (Mary and Ferrari, 2012). This was useful to homeland security authorities because images of the HSAS online (in the form of widgets and apps) were often hyperlinked (and so automatically transferred the user to the DHS' latest alert webpage when clicked). Given the initial desire to spread knowledge about the HSAS, and later for people to be aware of the current alert, the

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<sup>51</sup> John Ashcroft's preference is of particular note given accusations that he, in particular, attempted to exaggerate the terrorist threat via the HSAS (see Chapter 7).

efficacy is clear. And the example demonstrates, too, the multi-sensory affectivity of the HSAS through what Amoores (2007: 148) has called 'tactile vision': images appreciated through touch, as well as sight (explored further in the next chapter). Through the unconscious desire of persons to click upon objects, this aspect of the HSAS might have encouraged audiences to engage with tenets of homeland security that they would not have engaged with otherwise.

The final change to the HSAS' colours was made by President Bush himself (Fenzel, 2011, interview). Originally, 'guarded' had been white, but Bush switched it to blue the day before release (Fenzel, 2011, interview): "ostensibly", in the opinion of Fenzel (2011, interview), "to interrupt any advanced media speculation of how the system would be constructed." White, as well, may have suffered from negative symbolic associations, such as surrender or even racial connotations (Moore, 2006) (the racial dimensions of the System are considered in greater depth later). Such events are more than curious anecdotes: they show that the symbolism of the HSAS' colouration was being considered even at this early stage, and by no lesser an authority than the President. It was important that the HSAS' colours were affective, but affective in the 'right' way. In omitting white, Bush was creating a more forceful, aggressive, even masculine system; given white's association with surrender and surrender's with femininity (Wolff, 1976): an image of the war on terror that removed reference to defeat, even implicit. When the HSAS was unveiled in Washington the day afterward, the audience was unaware of the thought and effort that had been put into its design (Shapiro and Cohen, 2007), especially its coloration.

The ultimate design of the HSAS, then, might be understood partially through what Debrix has called, 'tabloid geopolitics': a reductionist style of presentation popularised by American politicians in recent years, which attempts to simplify and package contemporary fears such as terrorism into neatly circumscribed representations (Debrix, 2004; 2007; 2008). Indeed, as this section attests, Fenzel's (2011, interview) aim with the HSAS was to clarify and simplify Ridge's confusing press conferences regarding terrorism, and Mike Byrne (2012, interview) furthered this by adding colours to make the System as easily digestible and understandable as possible. The result was a design ready-made for the media; for whom schematic, conventionalized and simplified images are particularly favoured due to their ease of communication (Zelizer, 2005). For politicians such as Ridge, too, "[who] often rely on a repertoire of images, metaphors and 'common sense' statements to convey complex developments in world politics" (Dodds, 2003: 128), the HSAS was efficacious in clarifying the confusing briefings that had spurred its creation in the



first place, and within weeks of the design being finalised, Ridge was on stage to the proudly unveil the System.<sup>52</sup>

#### **4.4 Tom Ridge, body language and the introduction of the HSAS**

The HSAS was announced by Tom Ridge on March 12, 2002, at Constitution Hall, a few blocks from the White House (Figure 12).<sup>53</sup> In Richard Clarke's (2008: 203) opinion, "The tall, square-jawed Vietnam veteran had been recruited following the 9/11 attacks to give a reassuring public face to new defensive measures against terrorism." "Ridge looked like he was from central casting" (Clarke, 2004: 248), and he used body language to explain the new system to the assembled reporters; gesturing with his hands to emphasise the HSAS' five levels and pointing to a large reproduction of the HSAS on an easel standing next to his lectern (Figure 13). Thus, in some ways, Ridge was emblematic of what Dalby (2008b: 439) has described as, "The professional Western warrior... a key figure of the post September 11<sup>th</sup> era, physically securing the West... against barbaric threats to civilization." In this sense, Susan Jeffords' (1993) description of the Tom Clancy hero, Jack Ryan, might be recalled, too: "Ryan's success", she says, "depends not upon his individual knowledge or skill... but upon his ability to gather information, analyze reports, and act professionally" (Jeffords, 1993: 548). We might say, then, that Ridge was a useful amalgamation of military credentials and bureaucratic nous: a person trusted to undertake work in the latter at least partially because of his experience as the former, and combined with a physique that had served him well in one of America's most difficult conflicts.

Such visual performances attest, too, to the fact that in the modern era the selling of policies is at least partially dependent upon selling the politician that favours them (Castrionista, 1986), perhaps especially in the US (Roper, 2000). And thus to understand how government speeches attempt to convince audiences, we might consider "the context of delivery" (Kuus, 2008: 2074). Ridge's military history, official status, deportment and appearance were part of this, including the fact that he was wearing Western business attire, which has been described as shorthand code

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<sup>52</sup> There are other, unsubstantiated claims about the development of the HSAS. Herring (2003) suggests that the HSAS was based upon a Clinton-era natural disaster planning document (National Science and Technology Council, 2000), but I have found no evidence to support this claim. Koestler-Grack (2007: 79) has suggested that the Emergency Preparedness and Response Directorate developed the HSAS, but this entity was formed after the System's creation (*Homeland Security Act*, 2002).

<sup>53</sup> Constitution Hall had been used by the American Red Cross during World War Two, an organisation that would also contribute to the DHS' guidelines for the HSAS (DHS, nda). This was also the start of a 45 day period in which comments on the HSAS were accepted, but no alteration was ultimately made to its design (White House, 2002).

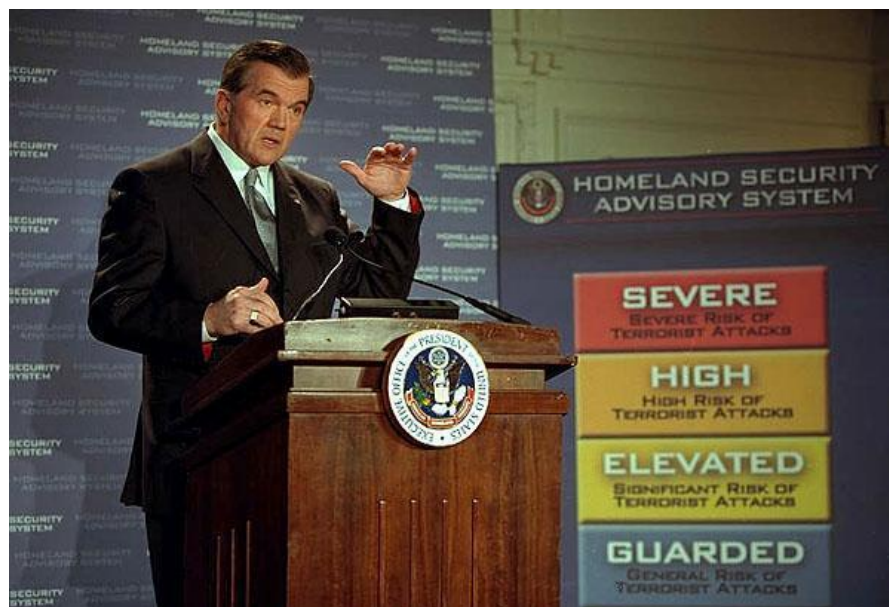
for desirable attributes in a leader: “discipline, order, authority, respectability, belonging, effective personal performance” (Craik, 2007: 38). In other words, Ridge’s attempt “to direct the attention of others to a particular area of geographical and political concern” (Dodds, 2010a: 282) was facilitated by, amongst other factors, ‘the little things’, such as his suit (Thrift, 2000). At the same time, through his emphatic gesticulation at the HSAS, Ridge was stressing that the US was under threat and evoking the American ‘imagined community’ in the process (Anderson, 2006; Campbell, 1998); defining the US by implicit reference to a constituent Other (terrorists) (Cresswell, 2004), and using his body as a manifest example of American identity with which the enemy could be contrasted (Young, 2003).

In this way, we might recall Bialasiewicz et al’s (2007) avowal of the importance of performativity within the realm of security, particularly in the US. For them, to understand performativity, one must consider both “the performances of individuals or policies [such as that of Ridge here, as well as]... the continuities between groups of security officials”. In this section, I want to focus initially on Ridge himself and the performance of this particular individual, but below we will also see how Ridge’s announcement was part of a wider performance heralding the HSAS; a performance that included the work of John Fenzel in expediting the creation of HSPD-3, thus providing continuity between groups of security officials. Ridge’s press conference was perhaps the most visible part of this performance, but it was also part of a wider set of relations that attempted to legitimise the HSAS from its very implementation.



**Figure 12: Constitution Hall in Washington, DC (Author)**

Broadly, Ridge’s introductory comments can be divided into those that referred to the System’s logistical and affective qualities. With reference to the first, Ridge (2002b) stated that the HSAS would enable persons “to take actions to address the threat.” As such, the System would be accompanied by security measures to protect people, cities and resources, although the exact nature of these measures was left unspecified (Ridge, 2002b). In addition, the System, whilst binding only upon federal agencies and recommended for all other levels of government, would foster partnerships between different levels of government, rather than offering a top-down mandate (Ridge, 2002b). At the same time, Ridge highlighted the more affective qualities of the HSAS; qualities that would come to the fore, particularly, with suggestions that the HSAS had been manipulated for political gain (Chapter 7). Thus, Ridge (2002b) described the HSAS as “a system that is equal to the threat”: in other words, a policy able to directly combat the threat and fear of terrorism. And this ability to alter emotions extended to the enemy, too. Unlike natural disasters, “terrorists can change their patterns and their plans based on our response, based on what they see that we’re doing” (Ridge, 2002b) (and see next chapter). Thus, as with his body language, Ridge was reiterating an identity geopolitics that divided ‘them’ from ‘us’ by reference to an HSAS that ‘enabled’ the domestic American population, but ‘disabled’ the plans of potential terrorists.<sup>54</sup>



**Figure 13: Tom Ridge introduces the HSAS (Morse, 2002)**

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<sup>54</sup> The White House (2002) echoed Ridge’s assertions, suggesting that, “Public announcements of threat advisories and alerts help deter terrorist activity”, but as with the OHS Chief, no justification for this assertion was given. Similar statements were made in DHS (2003a) and Ridge (2003b), and see the next chapter.

If this performativity worked spatially to implicitly reinforce the distinction between safe domestic spaces and people, and unsafe foreign equivalents, Ridge's introductory speech suggested that the HSAS was temporally influential, too. Thus, consolidating the suggestion that the System was "equal to the threat", Ridge stated that, "Under red you might see actions similar to the ones taken on 9/11" (Ridge, 2002b). In this way, the System was partially a method for the American public to process the events of the 'somatic marker' of 9/11; to retrospectively suggest that the 'new environment' precipitated by those attacks could now be managed, charted and placed in some kind of order (Raisch, 2012, interview). And the HSAS' temporal affectivity worked in the opposite direction, as well. The very presence of Code Green and Code Blue implied that things could get better in the future; and the association of 9/11 with Code Red, that they would never be worse than that day. In this sense, the HSAS could be used to situate the 9/11 attacks within a wider conceptual framework and narrative, just as members of the Bush administration and homeland security officials had attempted initially through comparison to previous successful wars (Chapter 2). Simultaneously, the HSAS conceded that another 9/11 was at least possible; an allusion that may have contributed to the System's ability to instil fear within certain members of the population (Chapter 7).

Whilst Ridge was physically introducing the System, the HSAS was also being written into law through a Homeland Security Presidential Directive that had been primarily authored by John Fenzel: HSPD-3 (Fenzel, 2011, interview); demonstrating the interplay between performances and discourses, mentioned above, as well as the role of other officials in performing the same discourse as Ridge, thus reinforcing its tenets. The Directive was the result of a series of discussions, which had ultimately been resolved on March 7, 2002, when Bush signed the document just five days before the System's unveiling on March 12. For some time, Fenzel and his team had debated whether the HSAS would require congressional legislation, a presidential executive order, or even "something as simple as an Office of Management and Budget circular (Fenzel, 2008b). Ultimately, an HSPD, a form of executive order, had been chosen (Fenzel, 2008b): part of a series that had been introduced following 9/11, "to record and communicate presidential decisions about the homeland security policies of the United States" (HSPD-1, 2001), as we have seen.<sup>55</sup> Thus, the final HSPD was emblematic of how, in Jackson's (2005: 3) terms, "the 'war on terrorism'

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<sup>55</sup> Not all 25 of these have been declassified, but for a comprehensive catalogue and description of those that have, see Federation of American Scientists (2012).

[has been] embedded into the institutions and practice of national security and law enforcement, the legal system, the legislative and executive processes”.<sup>56</sup>

The Directive itself, as well as reiterating that the HSAS would be binding only upon the federal government, specified that, “Threat conditions may be assigned for the entire Nation, or they may be set for a particular geographic area or industrial sector” (HSPD-3, 2002: 1). With respect to the criticisms of the System to come, particularly from state and local authorities (elaborated upon in the next chapter), it is important to note that these specifications were part of the HSAS’ initial design, even if their imperatives were not initially followed. From the start, the HSAS was intended to provide guidelines on specific actions required at each level, and to offer sector- and region-specific warnings. That it did not do so later, then, does not appear to be the fault of its creators. As Fenzel (2008a) recalls, “A full menu of programs and presidential directives designed to complete the picture [of HSPD-3] was drawn up and presented to the President in July 2002, but only a fraction of the intended sub-components required to create an effective strategy were ever approved.” When challenged as to why more of these measures were not enacted sooner, including geographically specific warnings, Deputy Secretary Loy (2012, interview) suggested that, quite simply, “The [OHS and later DHS email] inbox was on fire [with various problems that needed to be resolved] every day”; including trivial issues such as the procurement of basic office equipment (Ridge, 2009), which attest again to the importance of material cultures to statecraft (Meehan et al., 2013), and ‘material objects’ to organisations. Rather than a lack of foresight, then, the HSAS simply became lost, in part, in what Clarke (2008: 203) has termed, “the [DHS] bureaucratic kludge”; bureaucracy that ultimately delayed the advent of geographically specific alerts (Kirby, 2013) (and see the next chapter for greater elaboration upon this).

HSPD-3 was important for other reasons, too. It was the document that enshrined the fact that, despite Ridge having introduced the System, the Attorney General, John Ashcroft, would initially have the responsibility for setting the threat level (Fiorina, Peterson, Voss and Johnson, 2007). Ashcroft was required to consult Ridge and the Homeland Security Council, but the ultimate decision was Ashcroft’s (Ridge, 2002b).<sup>57</sup> There is no reason on the record for this delegation of power, but placing

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<sup>56</sup> For more on how the HSAS was enmeshed within US law, see Saulny (2004) and Bourgeois et al. (2004).

<sup>57</sup> A point of potential confusion is the difference between the Homeland Security Council (HSC) and the Homeland Security Advisory Council (HSAC). For the purposes of this thesis, the only difference of note is that the HSC assisted in determining the HSAS level and the HSAC did not. The latter has commented officially on the system, though (see

the decision-making process in the well-established Justice Department may have been an attempt to give threat level decisions added legitimacy (Rich Cooper, 2012, pers. comm.). The fact that President Bush signed-off on HSPD-3, but gave Ashcroft the power to determine the threat level, may also have been a political move in other ways: demonstrating the Bush administration's predilection for 'actionism', for example, i.e. acting whenever possible rather than not, regardless of the situation (Hannah, 2010). It gave the appearance, at least, that Bush and his cabinet were purposefully prosecuting the war on terror, whilst leaving the President with a degree of plausible deniability were the System to encounter criticism or prove unpopular. At the same time, it gave Bush some association with the HSAS, which could be pointed toward if the policy proved to be a success. The System went on to attract far more criticism and ridicule than it did praise (as this thesis will demonstrate), which may be why, after HSPD-3, Bush (2003) only commented upon the System once more, and in oblique terms.

Finally, HSPD-3 was important as the document that officially enshrined the new system's name, 'Homeland Security Advisory System', and its various accompanying annotations.<sup>58</sup> The term 'homeland', as stated, emerged during the late 1990s, but for Kaplan (2003) acquired particular resonance in the aftermath of 9/11; suggesting a circumscribed space of 'goodness' and purity in opposition to a more dangerous and volatile space outside. Coupled with the term 'security', then, it created an 'imagined community' that, whilst vulnerable (else why would it need to be secured?), was also being actively protected by policies such as the HSAS, organisations such as the OHS/DHS, and men such as Tom Ridge; perhaps lending legitimacy to all of these in the process. 'Advisory' has geographical connotations, too, of course, referring to the fact that the HSAS was binding only at the federal level, and not upon states and localities, with their often strongly autonomous identities in the US federal system (Fiorina, Peterson, Voss and Johnson, 2007). And the word 'System' gave the HSAS an air of scientificity and objectivity, too, in conjunction with its gridded aesthetic, and might have implied that the HSAS' operation was dependent upon thorough and deliberate process. At the same time, we might note the unintentional connotations of the System's name that indicate the slippages of official homeland security practice. 'Homeland', for example, has connotations with Nazi Germany (Brigham, 2005) – a link to the World War Two metanarrative that presumably homeland security

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HSAC, 2009), and is discussed in greater depth in Chapter 7 (see, too, DHS, 2009b; White House, nd). Such councils have Cold War predecessors, such as the Advisory Committee on Civil Defense (Office of Civil Defense, 1962) and the Civil Defense Advisory Council (Kerr, 1983), which performed similar functions.

<sup>58</sup> The name had been decided upon the month before its unveiling, at an interagency meeting at the OHS' premises on Nebraska Avenue, Washington, DC (Fenzel, 2008b).

officials did not intend – and it was these kinds of unintended consequences that were seized upon by those wishing to satirise the System (see Chapter 6). “Language”, as Sharp (2000a: 24) stipulates, “is not unproblematic, somehow *simply* describing what is there”, but is itself, “part of the process of world-making.”

The System’s annotations are also revealing. As well as the shrill repetition of the words ‘risk’, ‘terrorist’ and ‘attack’, which stressed the danger being faced, the HSAS’ five levels (‘severe’, ‘high’, ‘elevated’, ‘guarded’ and ‘low’) presented what might be called a ‘vertical geopolitics’ in the homeland security context (Graham, 2004); in that three of the terms refer to heights. Here, this ‘vertical geopolitics’ worked semantically. Thus, given that ‘elevated’ (Code Yellow) was positioned above ‘guarded’ (Code Blue), the implication was that the US, because it never fell below the former, was always ‘more than guarded’ (Barkun, 2011); perhaps preparing the American people for perpetual ‘war’ in the process and suggesting that defensive measures might become, as discussed above, the ‘new normal’.<sup>59</sup> By the same logic, Code Green, had it ever been used, would have implied ‘less than guarded’; perhaps one reason for why this never occurred. Given that the attack that inspired the creation of the HSAS came from the skies, the System’s verticality also curiously reflected the fact that after 9/11 the security and insecurity of the American homeland was at least partially associated with height. As the next chapter describes, aeroplanes were grounded after the only ‘severe’ (highest) alert, and so the HSAS mirrored the fact that to make America safe in this instance and lower the threat level, potentially dangerous objects, such as planes, needed to be lowered, too.

## ***Conclusions***

In attempting to discuss the genesis of any particular entity there is always a danger that an unproblematic lineage will be posited. It is important to stress again, then, that this is only one story of the HSAS’ creation, albeit one predicated upon the recollections of two officials heavily involved in the System’s design, including its principal architect, which, amongst other primary sources, have attempted to validate the analysis here. To ameliorate this possible limitation further, this chapter has attempted to place the creation of the HSAS within wider contexts, including civil defence and the advent of homeland security in the United States, to demonstrate how the System was not just a ‘product’ of these individuals, but of wider processes, too: both contemporary and historical. Through this chapter, it has also been possible

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<sup>59</sup> The ability of the System to promote resilience in the population was noted by those that worked on the HSAS’ development (Beardsworth, 2012, interview; Cooper, 2012, interview), and is discussed further in Chapter 7.

to refine conceptions of singular governments and government agencies acting as one, as the examples of the conflicts over where to initially set the HSAS level and the System's exact coloration attest. In conjunction with this, it might be suggested that projects undertaken by these 'groups' do not always emerge through rational consensus, but are sometimes predicated upon intra-group communication and empathy. The original idea for the HSAS, for example, was triggered by the fact that a White House Fellow noticed the confusion on his leader's face.



## 5. Federal, state and local governance:

### The HSAS in official thought and practice

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With HSPD-3, the HSAS was passed into law and began to be enacted across the United States. In order, this chapter considers the HSAS' first five alerts and reflects upon their security logics; how the HSAS level was communicated through both virtual and material media, and what this might tell us about the notion of 'tactile vision' with regard to homeland security (Amoore, 2007); the negative responses of certain states and localities that, after congressional review, resulted in the System being used to offer more geographically specific alerts; and how the appointment of Michael Chertoff, the second Secretary of Homeland Security and Ridge's successor, affected the HSAS' usage as it began to lose credibility. Throughout, it seeks to demonstrate that the 'everywhere war' hypothesis of the war on terror, discussed in Chapter 2, might be productively nuanced, and that the limitations of this notion were being demonstrated by American state and local governments during the earliest days of the HSAS. It also seeks to show that, *pace* the accounts of Martin and Simon (2008) and Massumi (2005), the practice of homeland security is not always a smooth process enacted by a homogenous entity known as 'DHS', but one that is also marked by inconsistencies, revisions and failures.

#### 5.1 The first five alerts (2002-2004) and the slippage of security logics

During its lifetime, the federal HSAS level changed – meaning the increase from Code Yellow and then down again – eight times. On the first five occasions, during the period March, 2002 to October, 2004, these were issued for the entire nation, and for periods outside of these alerts the HSAS remained at Code Yellow.<sup>60</sup> The conditions stated by OHS and DHS officials for changing the alert level, made at press conferences accompanying these, had their own geopolitics, and demonstrated a degree of inconsistency that would become a key criticism of the System by states and localities in the years ahead, as we shall see. Whilst homeland security officials were unwilling to discuss the nature of the intelligence behind each alert because of national security concerns (e.g. Loy, 2012, interview), by analysing each of these warnings in turn some of the various 'security logics' of the OHS and DHS –

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<sup>60</sup> For the press statements accompanying increases in the alert level, see, respectively: 1, statement unavailable; 2, Ridge, Ashcroft and Mueller (2003); 3, Ridge (2003a); 4, Ridge (2003b) and DHS (2003b); 5, Ridge (2003i). For those accompanying their decreases, see, respectively: 1, statement unavailable; 2, Ashcroft and Ridge (2003); 3, DHS (2003a); 4, Ridge (2003d) and DHS (2003c); 5, Ridge (2004a).

rationales that structured their understandings of security (Ciută, 2010) – can be identified, which are drawn out through analytical annotations of the stated reasons for each alert in the next five paragraphs. After this, these security logics are aggregated and discussed to demonstrate how the determination of the HSAS level was indicative of the often contradictory nature of homeland security practice.

The first alert, from September 10, 2002 to September 24, 2002, was issued just over six months after the System was introduced, and the only one during the OHS' existence.<sup>61</sup> “[B]ased on debriefings of a senior al Qaeda operative, [the alert warned] of possible terrorist attacks timed to coincide with the anniversary of the September 11<sup>th</sup> attacks on the United States.” (DHS, 2009c). These indicated that al Qaeda cells across South Asia were preparing car bomb and other attacks on foreign US facilities (DHS, 2009c). Given that both the source and target of the threat were abroad, and neither directly concerned the American homeland, we might see here an immediate inconsistency in a System that was concerned with, as HSPD-3 (2002: 1) attested, “threats that confront the homeland”. Whether intentional or not, we might also note that this warning served to reinforce President Bush’s Manichean division between what Thomas Barnett (2003) has called, ‘functioning core’ (including the US) and ‘nonintegrating gap’ (including South Asia); thus justifying that military action was required in the latter to safeguard the former (Dalby, 2007). Coming on the anniversary of 9/11, the alert reinforced the somatic marker of that date, too, and implicitly connected the government’s domestic response to Bush’s ‘actionism’ in creating the OHS in the first place with HSPD-3 (Hannah, 2010).

The second alert, from February 7, 2003 to February 27, 2003, was based upon specific intelligence, corroborated by multiple sources (Ridge, Ashcroft and Mueller, 2003), but no further details were given than these. As with the previous alert, the significance of contemporaneous events was cited, in this case the Muslim pilgrimage, the Hajj, which ended in mid-February (Ridge, Ashcroft and Mueller, 2003). Ridge, Ashcroft and FBI Director, Robert Mueller (2003), who made the announcement together, also stated that, “we look forward to a time when a reduced threat level [meaning chance of a terrorist attack, rather than the HSAS level] makes it possible to reduce the designation [of the HSAS]”. In other words, to them the HSAS was more than a warning system: it was a way to gauge the success of the DHS

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<sup>61</sup> It was also the only alert authorised by Attorney General John Ashcroft rather than the Secretary of Homeland Security. The latter was given those powers by the Homeland Security Act (2002), and these were consolidated in HSPD-5 (2003), which legally altered HSPD-3 (2002). This shift would prove to be confusing, even for officials. In 2002, the OHS (2002) itself overlooked the Attorney General’s role. And after the transition of authority, the CRS still stated that, “the Attorney General notifies the federal, state and local authorities of any change to the advisory color code.” (Moore and Reese, 2005: 14).

and the counterterrorism effort. It also appears that the intelligence for this warning came from enhanced interrogation (Freedman, 2005), up to and including torture, thus the HSAS, putatively reflecting a serious threat to the American people, might be seen as implicitly legitimising such practice in this instance (Hannah, 2006). The presence of three cabinet secretaries, in line with the discussion in the previous chapter, may also have been intended to lend validity to the warnings being issued.

The third alert, from March 17, 2003 to April 16, 2003, was made shortly before coalition forces invaded Iraq. Unlike previous alerts, this Code Orange was based upon no particular intelligence, only the belief that al Qaeda might retaliate for the upcoming offensive (DHS, 2009c; Ridge, 2003a). The HSAS was presumably changed, then, for the defensive practices that it inspired (discussed below), which some within the DHS clearly thought might promote the resilience and vigilance amongst civilians and officials that they deemed necessary to mitigate a future attack (Amoore, 2007). As with the first alert, this alteration also created an ‘imaginative geopolitics’, to paraphrase Dittmer (2010: 19), which connected threat at home with Saddam Hussein’s Iraq. But this connection was also contradictory. By the very act of issuing an alert, the HSAS implied that military action in Iraq was part of the effort to secure the American homeland and thus that such action was justifiable. At the same time, Code Orange, by definition, implied that the US was under greater threat than usual, and thus this alert suggested that the invasion of Iraq might precipitate attacks on the US; making the country less safe rather than safer.

The fourth alert, from May 20, 2003 to May 30, 2003, was altered in response to terrorist bombings in Saudi Arabia and Morocco (DHS, 2009c). Thus, as well as being pre-emptive like the previous alert, its security logic was retrospective, and rehearsed the connection between existential military action and the improved safety of the American homeland. In explaining the alert, though, Ridge was (2003b) again contradictory, stating that, “there is not credible, specific information with respect to targets or method of attack”. As well as breaching the tenets of HSPD-3 (2002), which stated that precisely such credibility was required, Ridge’s explanation of the alert change adhered better to another form of DHS advisory, the ‘information bulletin’ – a lesser warning, with a lower threshold for specificity and urgency (*Hearing [Select Committee]*, 2004: 15) – but no reason was given for why the HSAS was used rather than this form of warning. For Martin and Simon (2008), the DHS can be conceptualised by looking at three types of document: the DHS’ public statements and policy documents, and federal government reports. Here, however, an example of the first of these (Ridge’s press statement) directly contradicted an

example of the second (HSPD-3). DHS practice resists this kind of singular conceptualisation.

The fifth and final nationwide alert, from December 21, 2003 to January 9, 2004, was issued during what Ridge would later call, ‘Christmas Orange’ (Klein and Ridge, 2010). As with the first and second alerts, key drivers were time and specific intelligence. Christmas, with its many travellers and symbolic importance to a predominately Christian country, was seen by the DHS as an opportune period for terrorists to strike. The alert was interesting, too, because of the limitations of two particular security logics to which Ridge inadvertently admitted. The first was revealed in a comment regarding Iyman Faris, an Islamist terrorist captured by American authorities in March, 2003. Ridge (2003i) quotes Faris as saying that, “‘when America goes up [to Code Orange] and there’s added security or an added level of – added levels of prevention, we’re [al Qaeda] inclined to deter or postpone those attacks’, and that’s one of the reasons we [the DHS] do go up.” What Ridge did not explain, though, was what a terrorist’s reaction might be to a lowering of the alert level, which publicised that security measures were being lessened. Second, in defending the System, Ridge (2003i) stated with pride that, “we [the DHS] haven’t raised this level of alert in over half a year”. In other words, raising the alert was in some ways seen as a DHS failure.

There are three key issues of security logic across these five alerts, which can be defined under the terms: time, space and affectivity. With respect to the first, we might note that alerts were issued because of events including the first anniversary of 9/11, the Hajj and Christmas, 2003, but that, given this, no explanation was given as to why alerts were not issued on the second anniversary of 9/11, during other Muslim ceremonies, or over Christmas, 2002. Following this, there appears to have been confusion over whether the HSAS worked pre-emptively, or retrospectively, or both. Although designed to warn about future attacks, the HSAS’ fourth change, for example, occurred after terrorist bombings in Saudi Arabia and Morocco. Rich Cooper (2012, interview), who helped develop the System, has suggested that this was because, “when al Qaeda attack, they don’t just do one”. But again, if the DHS believed this, why did the HSAS not change after every global al Qaeda attack? The HSAS, then, did not conform to any single overarching operational doctrine. As Anderson (2010c: 788) says, “terms like doctrine or principle [in the context of the war on terror and homeland security] can imply an idealist script that stands apart from and pre-exists any actual case”. Rather, as Anderson (2010c: 788) continues, the notion of security logics helps us to think about how the ‘future geographies’

advocated by Western states are, in fact, “open to rearticulation as they are deployed by different actors in particular policies and programmes”.

With respect to the second contradiction of security logic, space, we might ask what, exactly, was the connection implied by the System between foreign spaces and the security of the American homeland? It was, of course, a central tenet of the Bush administration’s justification for war abroad that such action served to safeguard the US (Daalder and Lindsay, 2003), and in elevating the alert prior to the invasion of Iraq the HSAS implicitly connected these two realms. Secretary Ridge’s chief of staff, for example, Duncan Campbell (2012, interview), has suggested that whilst the war in Iraq was undoubtedly controversial, it did at least “push out” the borders of the US: in other words, it meant that the war was fought on battlefields abroad, keeping the American homeland safe in the process. But ironically, the HSAS implied that foreign intervention was having exactly the opposite effect. Rather, by elevating the alert prior to the invasion of Iraq in 2003, the ‘geopolitical imagination’ (Dittmer, 2010: 19) being invoked was that foreign war in Iraq had increased the threat of terrorist attack to the US from ‘elevated’ (Code Yellow) to ‘high’ (Code Orange). At the same time, though, it created the link between terrorism and Iraq that Bush was advocating at the time (Jackson, 2005), despite the fact that, “the secular Iraqi regime of Saddam Hussein had no connection to the 9/11 attacks, [and] was condemned by Osama bin Laden” (Ó Tuathail, 2003: 857).<sup>62</sup>

Lastly, the security logics of the first five alerts seemed to offer a necessarily limited conception of the HSAS’ affectivity. The outstanding example of this failure was a press conference by John Ashcroft and Tom Ridge (2003) after the end of the second alert. In their press statement they said that “protective measures” enacted by the federal government could now be reduced (Ashcroft and Ridge, 2003). But within moments of stating this, they suggested that, “al Qaeda will wait until it believes Americans are... less prepared before it will strike again.” (Ashcroft and Ridge, 2003). When Rich Cooper (2012, interview) was asked whether, as such, the most opportune time for terrorists to attack would be after a shift from Code Orange to Yellow, he appeared to concur. By connecting the HSAS so publicly to security measures, lowering the HSAS level signalled to terrorists that security measures would be similarly lessened, which led to ‘rearticulations’ of this particular security logic in the future (Anderson, 2010c). After the end of the fifth alert, for example, Secretary Ridge stated that, “Although we’ve returned to yellow, we have not let our guard down” (Strohm, 2004). But given that the HSAS dictated increasing security

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<sup>62</sup> Whether or not the White House might have been pressuring Ridge to foster such a connection is the subject of Chapter 7.

measures as the levels went up (HSPD-3, 2002), Ridge's comment may have been an attempt to retrospectively justify what he knew to be a fundamental flaw of the System.

In addition to these three, particular slippages, we might also note that the HSAS was undermined by perhaps an even more comprehensive failure of security logic, which can be encapsulated by the following hypothetical scenarios: if no warnings were issued and no attacks occurred, the System was redundant; if no warnings were issued and attacks occurred, the System had failed; if warnings were issued and no attacks occurred, the System had failed, too; and if warnings were issued and attacks occurred, the HSAS might have been correct, but this would be irrelevant because the DHS themselves would have failed so comprehensively in their first duty of protecting America. Thus, the only possible scenario under which the HSAS could 'succeed' was if an alert was issued and then, because of the security measures enacted, an attack was proven to have been thwarted. During the entire history of the HSAS, though, the DHS never claimed that this had occurred (Ryczek, 2010). Indeed, such an occurrence was impossible, because the decision-making process was confidential and alerts were redacted prior to publication (DHS and FBI, 2004; Shapiro and Cohen, 2007), under the tenets of the Homeland Security Act (2002). Members of Congress were issued with a 'secure brief' if they wished to know more about why an alert was issued, but these have never entered the public sphere (*Hearing* [Select Committee], 2004). The only scenario in which the HSAS could succeed in this respect, then, was one that it was impossible for the DHS to prove had occurred.

To help assuage these concerns, the DHS did attempt to improve the rigour and sophistication of the decision-making process for determining the alert. The Terrorist Threat Integration Center (TTIC), for example, was created in 2003 to consolidate intelligence reports to the DHS (Shenon, 2003p), having been first mentioned in Bush's State of the Union address the same year (Text of President Bush's, 2003).<sup>63</sup> The TTIC was comprised of elements from several agencies and departments, including the DHS, the FBI's Counterterrorism Division, the DoD, and the Director of Central Intelligence's Counterterrorist Center (FAS, 2005), with TTIC analysts given full access to pertinent information from across the intelligence community (Gilmore Commission, 2002; Ridge, 2003c). Excepting the first alert, threat level decisions

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<sup>63</sup> The TTIC was superseded by the National Counterterrorism Center later in 2004 after EO 13354 (FAS, 2005; NCTC, 2011), and its duties were transferred to the DHS' Office of Information Analysis and Infrastructure Protection (Haulley, 2006). The latter already had some responsibility for the everyday management of the HSAS through the Homeland Security Act (2002), but this consolidated its power.

were also filtered through the Homeland Security Council, whose statutory attendees included not only the President and the Homeland Security Secretary, but also the Defense Secretary and the Directors of the FBI and CIA. The neutrality of the Council, though, has been questioned, and accusations would emerge that some of its members had their own, political motives for advocating particular threat levels (see Chapter 7). Overall, then, the HSAS' first five alerts were predicated upon security logics that were, in many ways, inconsistent and partial; marked as much by their continual rearticulation and, indeed, illogicality, as the reverse (Anderson, 2010c).

## **5.2 Material culture, objects and the communication of the HSAS**

As with the multifariousness of the HSAS' wider story (see Chapter 2), the communication of HSAS levels required affects, such as interpersonal dialogue, and representations, such as posters, screen images and signs; human actors, such as government officials, emergency managers and technicians, and non-human, such as computers, screens and electronic circuits. Once the DHS Secretary (or, in the case of the first alert, the Attorney General) had decided to change the HSAS level – after briefings by the Terrorist Threat Integration Center and in conjunction with the Homeland Security Council – state and local officials were informed of the decision via secure telecommunications (White House, 2002). Only afterward would the media be informed, so that by the time the American public were aware of the threat level alteration, state and local governments could have press spokespersons on standby and clear procedures in place for the security measures that were to be taken. At least, that was the plan.

In actual fact, information leaked to media outlets much sooner than the DHS could get the word out to all levels of government: an insider might tell a journalist friend, or the press might be notified of an emergency press conference, which they could then surmise, perhaps with the assistance of the former, had been convened to issue an HSAS alert (Campbell, 2012, interview). Thus, state and local officials frequently relied upon the media rather than the federal government to inform them of the latest HSAS alert (Jenkins, 2012, interview). For example, Michael Chitwood, Chief of the Portland Maine Police Department, testified to the Senate Governmental Affairs Committee in 2003, “that he once received official notification of a threat level change from state authorities [who had been, in turn, informed by the DHS] eight hours after implementation” (Bailey, 2010: 18). By this time, it would have been well-publicised in the media. Similar incidents were recorded by emergency managers, police chiefs and fire authorities, amongst others (Partnership for Public Warning, 2003; Reese, 2003). Indeed, occasionally the decision of the HSC would leak to the

media before even the DHS could issue a press release, with the DHS responding by ensuring that press releases were always issued within two hours of any decision to change the HSAS level (Campbell, 2012, interview).<sup>64</sup>

Even when the DHS did manage to contact relevant local authorities, though, their information was often vague. Scott Behunin (2012, interview), for example, the former Director of Utah's Emergency Service and Homeland Security Division, recalls that when DHS officials phoned him about specific threats to Utah during the first HSAS alert in 2002, their information was insubstantial and Behunin's follow-up questions regarding their intelligence, based upon local knowledge of his state and its vulnerabilities, "shot it to pieces" (Behunin, 2012, interview). The DHS' initial 'everywhere' approach to the terrorist threat simply stretched the federal department's knowledge of the country too far, and in response to concerns such as Behunin's the DHS made their notification procedure more robust, just as they had improved their decision-making process with the creation of the TTIC. By 2004, a host of procedures was being used to inform local and state governments of HSAS changes before the media became cognizant of these, which included: conference calls to governors and/ or appropriate security officials; telephone calls from the Federal Protective Service to federal agencies; emails from the Homeland Security Operations Center (HSOC) to federal, state and local agencies; electronic communication systems administered by the FBI and the HSOC, such as the National Law Enforcement Telecommunications System and Joint Regional Information Exchange System, respectively; and conference calls and emails to federal agencies' Chiefs of Staff and public affairs offices (Jenkins and Sebastian, 2004).<sup>65</sup>

In enacting such measures, the DHS were emphasising what MacManus and Caruson (2006: 18) have called, in the context of homeland security, "the importance of strong vertical information networks among federal, state, and local governments." It was another form, then, of homeland security's 'vertical geopolitics' (Graham, 2004), and an attempt to ensure that homeland security's geographical nexus of power/ knowledge was diffused more evenly across federal, state and local governance

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<sup>64</sup> There were other instances of miscommunication, too. On Christmas Eve, 2003, in Millersville, Maryland, a mistaken Code Red was issued for the local police force, causing much confusion before ultimately being rescinded (County endured, 2004).

<sup>65</sup> The Federal Protection Service is part of the DHS and its primary duty is to safeguard the federal government's built and human resources (FPS, nd). The HSOC, located within the DHS' Office of Operations Coordination, provides terrorist threat monitoring services (DHS, 2003f), and was created by the Initial National Response Plan in 2003 (DHS, 2003g). HSPD-5 (2003) also placed the communication systems of the Department of Justice at the disposal of the DHS, to expedite the communication of the latest HSAS level throughout government, which built upon an intranet communication system that the OHS (2002) already had in place.



(Hannah, 2006), so that all levels could contribute toward the homeland security effort. Again, though, we might note how the DHS' initial failures in this regard, coupled with their ad-hoc solutions to the problem, challenge notions that the DHS has smoothly expedited any single mission (see Mabee, 2007; Martin and Simon, 2008). Indeed, even though the DHS attempted to take the media out of the equation with respect to the initial communication of the HSAS level, they also relied upon the media in other circumstances, such as relaying the HSAS level to members of the American public (Beverina, 2006; FEMA, 2002; Major and Atwood, 2004; Murphy, 2004; Pecora, 2004), and educating this same 'group' about the System and homeland security more broadly (Grant, 2007; Ridge, 2003c).



**Figure 14: An HSAS in-screen graphic on Fox News (Cheney Watch 1, 2010)**

For their part, a large proportion of the media appeared eager to assist the DHS in this respect (and for more on the popular representation of the HSAS, see the next chapter). The latest HSAS alert was frequently broadcast through both cable and public television outlets, often via a graphic affixed somewhere on-screen, such as the ticker (Ganderton, Brookshire and Bernkopf, 2004; Knight, 2005) (Figure 14). Occasionally, these were covered as 'breaking news' on major television networks (Scheuer, 2004), "interrupting the familiar pattern of such early afternoon programs as "Family Feud" and "Passions""; at other times, they headed scheduled news reports (Bloch-Elkon and Shapiro, 2007). This aspect of homeland security, then, rather than the formation of Ridge Global, attests to what Amoores (2009a: 50) has called, "securitization in everyday life". Partly, this might have been because of the

HSAS' tabloid aesthetic and ready reproducibility (Debrix, 2007; 2008; Zelizer, 2004), as mentioned previously, but we might also cite much of the media's apparent proclivity toward covering any development in the war on terror at this time (Silberstein, 2004).<sup>66</sup>



**Figure 15: The HSAS iPad application (Author)**

The ability of the media to affect people in certain ways, with regard to accusations that the HSAS was manipulated for electoral gain, is discussed in Chapter 7, but I would also like to note here some of the affectual and other non-representational qualities that facilitated the HSAS' communication in the first place: qualities that draw attention to what MacDonald (2006: 53) has called, "observant practice". Televisions, tablets, desktop computers and smart phones were all viable technologies for viewing the HSAS, but all markedly different propositions, too. As Berger (1972) notes, images are partially defined by the many different contexts in which they are consumed and these first two technologies, for example, might be devices through which one expects to be entertained, in particular. That the HSAS

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<sup>66</sup> Whilst Fox News covered the System extensively (Frei, 2010), there is no evidence that the station's oft-cited favouritism toward President Bush and his policies (DellaVigna and Kaplan, 2007) extended to the HSAS. The overwhelming majority of Fox News' stories on the HSAS were either neutral or critical, which was a similar trend identified to that of, for example, *The New York Times* (see Appendix 9.3 and discussion in Chapter 3).

could be downloaded as an iPad ‘app’ may have connected it, in viewers’ minds, to eBooks, films, music and digital maps, some of the most popular apps on that device (Figure 15). Viewing the HSAS on a desktop computer pop-up, though, might have linked it to work or study (Hewgill, 2002); and on a smart phone, to communication and social media. These are generalisations, but offer some indication of how different media might have affected the viewing experience. Moreover, recent technologies such as tablets and smart phones lend themselves to new ways of seeing, one of which has been described by Amoore (2007) as ‘tactile vision’; a notion worth exploring further to further break down the divide between the representational and the non-representational.

The app designed for the touch-screen interface of the iPad, which displayed the current HSAS level, was perhaps the clearest example of tactile vision and put the HSAS, in the words of its creator, “at the tip of your fingers” (McElveen, 2010). The app displayed an image, but one that could only be fully engaged with by touch: tapping the screen to open the program; holding the device whilst doing so; and tapping it again to close (McElveen, 2010). As Ash (2009: 2108) has said, “the content of images is increasingly wedded to the materiality of screens. By this I mean that digital technology – in computing, cinema, photography, and elsewhere – gives rise to images that cannot exist without screens because they have no reference to an actually existing photographed or captured referent.” Certainly, the HSAS was a simulacrum in this sense (Baudrillard, 1994), and the ‘tactility’ of its vision here draws attention to how the senses of sight and touch interact in the transmission of geopolitical knowledge (Amoore, 2009b). But Amoore (2007: 257) goes on to suggest that, “Tactile vision such as that involved in screenic seeing disrupts the precautionary logic of vigilance and subverts the sense of sight that is necessary to foresight”, implying that it can, as such, be equated with some kind of anti-geopolitical perspective on homeland security (Routledge, 1998). In the case of the iPad app, tactile vision did not contest the DHS’ perception of the terrorist threat, but the opposite; this was exactly what it was embracing and proliferating.

The material geographies of the HSAS’ communication could also be more ‘low-tech’. The private companies Accuform Signs and Emedco, for example, sold large, bold, water-proof signs to be displayed in workplaces (Figure 16). In a creative justification, Accuform (2012) stated that, “With industrial facilities mentioned as possible targets [presumably within HSPD-7], employees must currently rely on sporadic media reports to receive updates about the terrorist threat level.” To ameliorate this, Accuform’s sign, retailing at approximately \$90, gave constant updates to worried workers – so long as it was maintained – “passing this crucial information along to

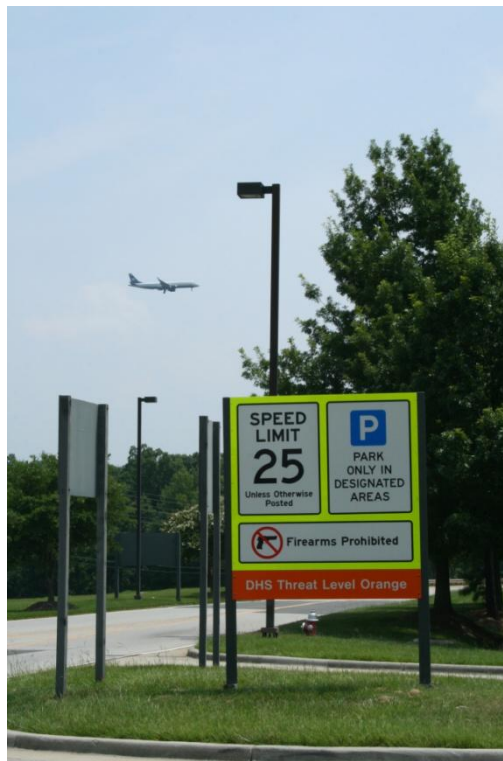
your employees” (Accuform Signs, 2012). The company’s accompanying instructions had their own geographies, too: “Place in high traffic areas”, Accuform (2012) stated, “such as employee entrances, lunchrooms, or break areas.” Again, the limitations of the DHS’ initial notion that the terrorist threat applied everywhere were exposed as private companies, like state and local officials, applied and adapted the HSAS’ generic alerts to the locations pertinent to them. We might also see the placement of such posters as indicative again of Meehan et al.’s (2013: 1) assertion that, “objects themselves are central to the production, organization, and performance of state power”; expedited, here, through another method of securitising everyday life (Amoore, 2009a).



**Figure 16: An Emedco HSAS poster (Author)**

The posters themselves are some of last examples of the HSAS’ material culture that it is possible to acquire. In them, the DHS logo has been replaced by the Stars and Stripes and the font used differs from that of the official HSAS, presumably because US copyright law protects the logos of government agencies (US Government, 2013), but perhaps also because the makers wanted to create consistency between this poster and Emedco’s other ranges. In this way, then, the HSAS became part of both homeland security discourse, but also public safety discourse more broadly. For Accuform and Emedco, terrorist attacks were a threat equivalent to road traffic

accidents, construction site mishaps and building fires. For them, and those to whom they sold the posters, terrorism became part of the American hazards landscape and this was another way, therefore, in which the threat of terrorist attack became engrained in US society post-9/11. We might also see the purpose of such posters as part of what Ingram and Dodds (2011: 89) have called, “the emergence of the ‘homeland-security industry’”. Whilst the majority of this “flourishes on state spending, secured via close relationships among manufacturers of weapons and information technologies, policy makers, the military, intelligence and security practitioners” (Ingram and Dodds, 2011: 89), this instance demonstrates the smaller-scale, bespoke and more niche aspects of this industry, too.



**Figure 17: Raleigh-Durham airport, North Carolina (Sagdajev, 2008)**

Whilst the DHS could exercise only marginal control over the communication of the HSAS via news broadcasting and other more material forms of media, the DHS had almost complete authority over one of the key sites of HSAS communication, the airport (Figure 17): a space of especial control and management (Adey, 2004; Parks, 2007). After the introduction of the HSAS, airports were required by law to implement contingency plans based upon the System (Price and Forrest, 2009), a power consolidated when the Transportation Security Authority (TSA), which managed such locations, was incorporated into the DHS on March 25, 2003. Some

states, such as Maine, went so far as to write the display of the HSAS at airports into law (*An act to display*, 2007), and Congress later mandated consideration of the HSAS by rail transportation with the Surface Transportation and Rail Security Act (2007); attesting, again, to Jackson's (2005) suggestion that the war on terror has become embedded into the US legal system in a variety of ways. Airports were also the chief location for the non-visual communication of the HSAS, with automated announcements of the latest alert – “The Department of Homeland Security has determined the threat level to be elevated” (Boyd, 2008) – becoming part of the American air travel experience (Carafano, 2009; Carafano, 2011, interview; Frei, 2010), and attesting to the fact that, in writing accounts of geopolitics, we should remain aware of non-visual as well as visual forms of communication (Pinkerton, 2005).

The presence of the HSAS at airports highlights another slippage of the DHS' various and inconsistent security logics, too. The System's stated aim was to work as a warning device, but there was little that one could usefully learn from it moments before boarding a flight. In this sense, the aural HSAS at airports might be described partially as 'security theatre', wherein, “the performance of security is more important than actual security, and the theatrical serves as a substitute for the real” (Raley, 2008: 199): an approach to security demonstrated by the DHS at other sites, such as land as well as air borders, in the opinion of Amoores and Hall (2010). For his part, Rich Cooper (2012, interview) has stated that the HSAS was never designed as 'security theatre'; a term that implied, he believed, a purposeful attempt to play upon the fears of people. The space between the opinions of Raley, Amoores and Hall, and of Cooper, though, does not mean that one must wholly subscribe to either conception of the DHS' practices. Rather, this space highlights, again, the disparity between the DHS' intention for the HSAS and what was ultimately realised. The security professionals involved in the creation of the System, as the previous chapter attests, designed the HSAS as a genuine tool of public safety, but its effects in this instance were unexpected and unmanageable.

### **5.3 Effects, costs and the response of state and local officials**

Once a change in the threat level had been determined and communicated, an array of protective measures was implemented (Rollins and Cunningham, 2005), varying according to location and jurisdiction. Of the 56 American states and territories, 55 adopted the System in response to HSPD-3, and for the first HSAS alert all followed the federal lead (Jenkins and Sebastian, 2004a). The authors of the GAO report on the HSAS, William Jenkins and Debra Sebastian, were unwilling to provide the name

of the locality that did not adopt the System (because of what they deemed confidentiality restrictions), but given that no mention can be found in the media of a state that did not adopt the System, and that DC definitely followed the HSAS (Anderson, 2004), it is almost certainly one of the US' territories: American Samoa, Guam, the Northern Mariana Islands, or Puerto Rico. Given the remoteness of many of these locations, it is perhaps more remarkable that four decided to follow the HSAS than that one did not. And the adoption of the HSAS by these territories further problematises the word 'homeland' in the System's title. Kaplan (2003: 86) has suggested that the term evokes a "domestic space" with "the ring of ancient loyalties", which it does, but here the 'Homeland Security Advisory System' applied to locations thousands of miles from the US mainland, acquired during relatively recent territorial expansions. Again, 'homeland' needs to be understood as an imaginative geography, as well as a particular delimited space.



**Figure 18: Code Orange vehicle inspections (Diemer, 2010)**

Specific security measures enacted after an alert change were myriad, but included, at the federal level, an increase in air patrols over cities (Three years, 2004), the improved protection of vulnerable infrastructure (DHS, 2003b), and stricter immigration procedures (DHS, 2003e); at the sub-federal level, delayed truck movements in New York (Schulz, 2004), increased vehicle inspections in San Francisco (Gorman, 2003), and tightened security protocols within the airline industry (Kirschner, 2006; Ridge, 2003e, 2003i) (Figure 18); and at the individual level, the installation of home alarm systems to detect intruders by some citizens

(Major and Atwood, 2004), the alteration of travel plans by others (Fox, 2012, interview; Reker, 2012, interview), and the purchase of duct tape by still more, apparently to provide protection from biological attacks (Porteus, 2003a) (and see the satire of this episode discussed in Chapter 6). Such activities attested to Tom Ridge's original desire for the System to spur action (Ridge, 2009), and demonstrate the power of this affectivity. And to break the latter down further, we might cite Dittmer's (2010: 94) three-fold typology of affect as 'amplification', 'contagion' and 'resonance'. Here, the HSAS' affect was amplificatory, in that initially the media and the DHS took a single alert and broadcast it nationally to various authorities; contagious, in that it circulated beyond the individual and caused, for example, entire airports to alter their security measures; and resonant, in that particular affects, such as increased vehicle inspections, necessitated that people alter their travel plans.

But with great power also came great cost. For the federal government, additional average daily expenditure on security measures at the largest agencies could run to well over \$150,000 per Code Orange (Jenkins and Sebastian, 2004). It was the costs incurred by state and local authorities, though, that would have the most significant effect on the HSAS' development. At Code Orange rather than Code Yellow, for example, particular costs were incurred by the following locations: Ossining, NY, \$8000 in policing costs for the fourth alert; Phoenix, AZ, \$154,000 a week during a Code Orange; Oakland, CA, an extra \$760,000; New Orleans, LA, \$300,000 in policing for the fifth alert; Los Angeles, CA, \$2.5 million a week; New York, NY, \$5 million a week (Council of State Governments, 2003; *Hearing* [Select Committee], 2004; Kirschner, 2006; Strohm, 2004; US Conference of Mayors, 2003). For all cities, the US Conference of Mayors (2003) estimated that a Code Orange cost \$70 million to maintain and the Center for Strategic and International Studies, a public policy research institution, suggested that for the whole country, including the federal government, Code Orange costs hit \$1 billion a week (Strohm, 2004).

At first, state and local Code Orange costs were covered by state and local governments (Enders and Sandler, 2012), but as soon as the huge sums of money required became apparent, they looked toward the federal government to recompense them for these 'unfunded mandates' (Wermuth, 2012, interview). There appear to have been two main reasons for this. First, and most practically, localities simply did not have the funds to pay for the security measures that they were being advised to enact (Clarke, 2004). Second, the federal government, by order of the US Constitution (2009), was charged with providing for the common defence and, with Bush having declared a war on terror on behalf of the entire nation, localities argued that their costs should be considered part of this (*Hearing* [Select Committee],



2004). In 2003, the House attempted to pass a bill, sponsored by Representative Peter DeFazio (D-OR), that would have recompensed states for these security expenditures (*State Threat Alert Reimbursement Act, 2003*). Specifically, it required that, “the Secretary of Homeland Security... reimburse a State for direct expenses and losses that exceed normal operating expenses incurred by State and local government entities in the course of duty during the effective period of an increased threat alert”, but the bill failed. Given that the bill was cosponsored by 56 Democrats and no Republicans, presumably the GOP was responsible for its collapse and thus supported the stance of the DHS, which was, of course, under Republican leadership at this time.

For their part, the DHS refuted the suggestion that they should cover the costs of security measures enacted by state and local authorities (Ridge, 2004k). With reference to the suggestion that Codes Orange cost the country \$1 billion a week, Ridge stated that he had, “absolutely no idea the basis around which they [the Center for Strategic and International Studies] drew the conclusion” (Strohm, 2004: para 12).<sup>67</sup> That the Constitution obliged the DHS to pay for such measures was similarly rebuffed. When Deputy Secretary Loy was asked whether the Constitution’s provision for the federal government to provide for the national defence extended to the HSAS, he replied that homeland security was the shared responsibility of federal, state and local levels of government (*Hearing [Select Committee], 2004: 67*). With rather more acerbity, he added that, “The Homeland Security Alert System [sic] was created as an information-sharing tool, not a rationale for additional Federal funds”, and drew attention to the fact that the DHS themselves made no specific appropriation request to pay for running the HSAS (*Hearing [Select Committee], 2004: 68*). In other words, the DHS could cut their cloth, so state and local authorities should be able to, as well.

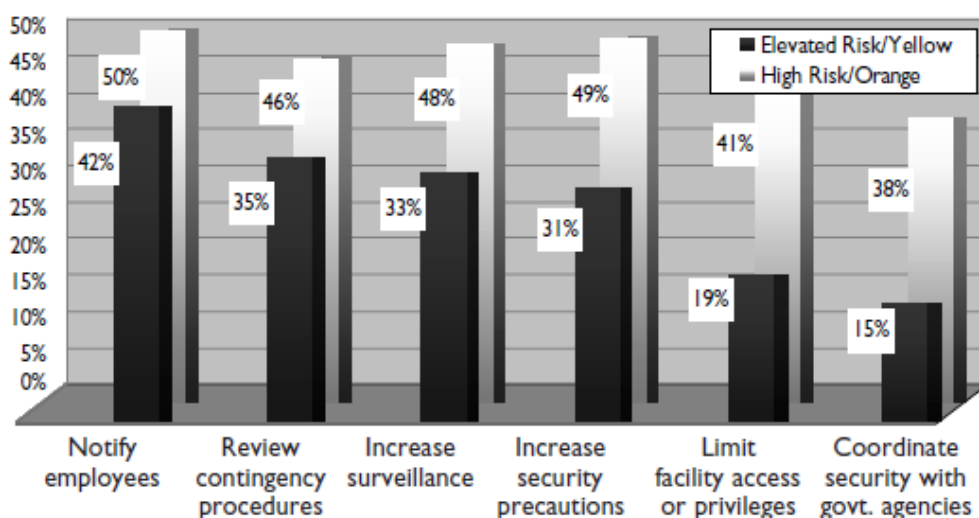
There are interesting parallels here, too, to the tension between the federal government and local authorities during Cold War civil defence. As Barker-Devine (2006) has documented, many rural communities were alarmed at the time by the notion that they would be required to support large urban populations evacuated in the event of nuclear war, and to ameliorate these concerns the Federal Civil Defense Administration promised that those towns housing survivors would be financially recompensed. The viability of such a policy was questionable (Barker-Devine, 2006) – how could communities prove how many people they had supported? Would there even be a federal government left to pay them? – but what is of pertinence here is the

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<sup>67</sup> A comment that, at the same time, suggests the importance attached by political elites to the opinions of think tanks on homeland security issues (see Chapter 3).

way that, during both Cold War civil defence and homeland security, the plans of relevant federal authorities were problematised by smaller-scale authorities who interpreted federal metageographies of ‘the rural’ or ‘the state’ through the lens of their necessarily local concerns; most frequently budgetary. Again, we see here how the master plans of homeland security break down, and the limitations of the suggestion that the HSAS worked across “geographical and social differentials”, or the like (Massumi, 2005: 32).

The concerns of state and local authorities with respect to the costs of the System were reflected elsewhere. In the private sector, an area that the DHS needed outside for mitigating the terrorist threat given that 85% of American infrastructure was under private control as of 2003 (Gilmore Commission, 2000), the costs associated with alerts could mean the difference between financial viability and bankruptcy (Don’t waste, 2004; Schmidt, 2004). In a 2004 survey by ASIS International, an association of security professionals, exactly half of companies contacted did not even notify employees if there had been a change (How to react, 2004), and a US industry paper, *Safety Director’s Report*, cautioned that if a company automatically enacted pre-defined security measures in response to the HSAS they could be wasting precious cash and resources (Don’t waste, 2004) (Figure 19). From hotel chains to Major League Baseball stadia (Mervine, 2004; Kalist, 2010), costs were being incurred by the private sector that did not appear to be worth the investment, because no terrorist attacks ultimately transpired that threatened the commercial enterprise in question. Whilst, as we have seen, Accuform and Emedco were producing posters through which private industry could inform their employees of the latest HSAS level, it appears that not all companies were enacting such measures.



**Figure 19: Corporate responses to DHS threat levels (How to react, 2004)**

At the same time, and as the examples of Accuform and Emedco also attest, such apathy did not prevent private companies from attempting to monetise the HSAS. The group Future Fibre Technologies, for example, pioneered ‘Threat-level Adaptive Zoning’: security fences with sensors that were automatically triggered by a change in the alert (New product profile, 2006; Texas border watch, 2006). And a similar technology was employed by the Metropolitan Police Department of Washington, DC, which tied the latest HSAS alert to what Klick and Tabarrok (2005: 270) have called, “virtual street presence”. Emphasising the agency of non-human actors in the communication of the HSAS (Anderson and Harrison, 2010), elevations in the threat level triggered a normally dormant closed-circuit camera system “that covers sensitive areas of the National Mall.” (Klick and Tabarrok, 2005: 270). Presumably, this included sensitive bodies, too; those acting ‘suspiciously’ within these ‘sensitive areas’ (and see later discussion of the racial implications of the HSAS). Thus, the police’s system adhered to Meehan et al.’s (2013: 5) suggestion that, “CCTV is often used as a social and spatial ordering strategy that serves the interests of the elite, producing data that codes particular bodies in unequal ways”. And the fact that, “The camera system is not permanent; it is activated only during heightened terror alert periods” (Klick and Tabarrok, 2005), attests to the contingency of security practices, too (Adey, 2009).

At a broader scale, it appears that the stock markets were generally unimpressed by HSAS alterations, with Pagano and Strother (2008) suggesting that threat level changes had no effect on equity markets; and Mooney et al. (2006) and Karakas (2007) the same, but for stock returns. If the HSAS had little effect on the functioning of the US’ neoliberal economy in this respect, though, the huge expenditure incurred by the public sector, in the form of heightened security measures, may have done. Ironically, given that the DHS publicly acknowledged that bin Laden’s chief targets were those of economic opportunity (Ridge, 2004k), the adverse effect of the HSAS on the US economy achieved some of al Qaeda’s goals for them (Cockrum, 2008; Greenhalgh, 2007). And Congress, in the form of Representative Cox (R-CA), recognised this: “It is, after all, a fundamental part of the terrorist strategy to destroy our economy and our way of life. We must not, through our well-meaning efforts [costly HSAS security measures], give them any help.” (*Hearing* [Select Committee], 2004: 3). On condition of anonymity, a homeland security official, with reference to this aspect of the HSAS, made the same point and argued that in economic terms the

9/11 attacks had been some of the most successful in history.<sup>68</sup> If the war on terror was partially about securing the neoliberal economy (Morrissey, 2011), this aspect of the domestic war effort was having the opposite effect.

The solution of states and local governments to these costs was to adapt the HSAS more precisely to their own needs. At first, this was a source of pride for Ridge and something for which he actively campaigned; believing that it would make the HSAS more targeted (Ridge, 2003c). Later, though, as states began to heavily reengineer its directives and even ignore federal warnings entirely, the HSAS' credibility was eroded (Paul and Park, 2009). The first states on record as having ignored the federal HSAS were Hawaii and Utah. After the HSAS' second elevation in February, 2003, Hawaii maintained their already lower default, Code Blue (Hawaii State Civil Defense and American Red Cross, nd; Wermuth, 2004). In justifying the decision, Hawaii's Adjutant General and Homeland Security Director, Robert Lee, stated that, "If you were a tourist on Maui or Kauai or the Big Island, it made no sense to have that elevated threat and security level in those areas versus some of our key sites" (Murphy, 2004). Lee's defence reveals that financial cost to the state, in this case lost tourism revenue, was one of the key reasons that Hawaii dissented (Prizzia, 2006), as well as the federal threat level's imprecision at the state, let alone national level. The Honolulu Police Department had previously complained that it would cost the state capital as much as \$1.5 million to maintain a potential Code Red (State gets \$6.9m, 2003), and so the incentive to change level was all but non-existent, especially for a state further away from the 9/11 attacks than London in the UK.

Hawaii's dissent is particularly ironic, too, given that Ridge (2003h), in an address in that state, praised the 'shared language' and 'two-way flow' of information that the HSAS inspired across government. Indeed, these two sound-bites were favourites of the Secretary that he delivered at conferences across the country (Ridge 2003g, 2004b, 2004d, 2004f, 2004h, 2004i, 2004j, 2004l, 2004m, 2004n), and which he presumably thought promoted the HSAS. And they can also be used to reflect upon Kuus' (2008: 2074) call, in the context of statements made by political elites, "to consider the mundane repetition of arguments in speeches". Here, the repetition of this particular statement highlighted the lack of nuance within many of the DHS' speeches on the HSAS, as well as the fact that stock phrases were often used rather than tailored sentiments addressed to particular places. Again, we might query the contention that homeland security can be conceptualised through only the official discourse of the DHS (Martin and Simon, 2008). As with the practice of the HSAS

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<sup>68</sup> Interview conducted in person in Washington, DC, 2012.

more widely in these early days, the limitations of the DHS' generic and 'everywhere' approach toward the security of the homeland were exposed in this instance.

Utah's dissension was based upon similar reasons to Hawaii's. Scott Behunin (2012, interview), Utah's Director of Emergency Services and Homeland Security Division, recalls that when the federal threat level was increased it was unclear whether that meant that Utah had to employ all of its security measures at substantial cost, or more targeted, cost-effective defences; and Behunin was the state representative that first broke the news at press conference, having been ordered to maintain Code Yellow by Utah Governor, Mike Leavitt (R-UT) (Behunin, 2012, interview). As with Hawaii, the geographies of the state might explain its dissension. Utah is one of the US' most rural states (United States Census Bureau, 2013) and as Shenon (2003k; 2003m) says, "The system... created particular confusion in rural, sparsely populated parts of the country that appear to face no obvious threat but have been expected to step up security when the national threat level is raised." In other words, certain state and local authorities believed that particular areas, such as urban agglomerations, faced a greater threat than they did, and were thus reticent to enact costly security measures. Hawaii and Utah's dissent received some media coverage (Shenon and Lichtblau, 2003; Murphy, 2004, respectively), and over time other localities began to dissent, too (Gorman, 2003; Rosman, 2003). The System was clearly not working in the face of the uneven geographies of homeland security and the DHS needed to act.

#### **5.4 Official reviews, specific alerts (2004-2006) and Michael Chertoff**

Prior to the dissent of states, refinements to the HSAS had already been recommended in the post-action reports of several Top Officials (TOPOFF) exercises – modern equivalents of the civil defence exercise, Operation Alert (Garrison, 2006) – which attempted to refine the DHS' response to a terrorist attack, just as Operation Alert had sought to improve civil defence planning (Oakes, 1993a; 1993b; 1994). The first TOPOFF exercise occurred before the HSAS' introduction (Ridge, Green, Nickels et al., 2003), but the second, on March 12, 2003, occurred exactly one year after the HSAS was implemented and, at the time, was the largest terrorist response exercise ever held in the US (DHS, 2003h). Simulating a biological attack on New Jersey, it was the first scenario to test federal and state response to a nationwide Code Red, and involved numerous DHS and New Jersey officials, including the Governor of that state, Jim McGreevey (D-NJ) (DHS, 2003g). But the results were poor, with the After Action Summary Report finding that there was confusion among participants "regarding specific protective actions to be taken by specific agencies under an HSAS

Severe Threat Condition Red” (Office of the Inspector General, 2005); confusion explored below.

Ben Anderson and Pete Adey (2011: 1101) have suggested that whilst the overall purpose of such exercises is to refine emergency planning, this is facilitated and/ or inhibited by “Mundane affects of comfort, familiarity, and ease... (re)produced in the moments that surround and enable the actual ‘play’ of exercises, including lulls in-between phases of play”. In the case of TOPOFF 2, just such ‘mundane affects’ were part of how the HSAS was thought about and discussed. Rich Cooper (2012, interview), who worked on the exercise, recalled that in response to the simulated attack the Governor decided to issue a Code Red. But the Governor did not consider the effects that this would entail, which were that, “all the airports shut down, all the ports shut down, the bridges shut down, the tunnels were shut down” (Cooper, 2012, interview). As Cooper (2012, interview) recalls saying, “governor, you’ve now created an island [preventing outside help]... And the governor, all of sudden, was like, ‘oh, I didn’t know Code Red [had those effects]’... so I made the joke... are we going to go from a Merlot red... to a sort of Chablis blush? And we had some kind of fun with the exercise with it”.<sup>69</sup> Here, the planning of homeland security was not predicated upon epochal notions such as ‘risk society’, then, but emerged through moments of confusion and humour (Anderson and Adey, 2011); the inconsistency and failures of homeland security.

Thus, for the DHS, TOPOFF 2 stressed two things: first, that states and localities needed more guidance on what each HSAS level meant; and second, that the DHS might make the System easier to use by targeting alerts to more specific areas (DHS, 2007), so that the confusion of people like Governor McGreevey could be ameliorated. During the same year, the Partnership for Public Warning (2002a, 2002b) provided extensive feedback to the DHS on the HSAS, and the following autumn the CRS Analyst, Shawn Reese (2003), published the first report on the System by a government agency.<sup>70</sup> This was the beginning of federal level critique of the System. Initially classified, ‘Homeland Security Advisory System: Some Issues for Congressional Oversight’, was distributed only to members of Congress (Shenon, 2003m), and provided ammunition to those critical of the System. Senator Frank

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<sup>69</sup> The suggestion that variations within each colour might benefit the HSAS was made elsewhere, too (C-SPAN, 2007; Shenon, 2002c; Kirschner, 2006; Ridge, 2003e), but this was never formalised within the System’s design.

<sup>70</sup> The White House, for their part, rarely commented on the HSAS. Ari Fleischer (2002) defended the System in response to a direct question in 2002, and it was occasionally referenced indirectly (Shenon and Wilgoren, 2003), but, as mentioned previously, it appears that the White House did not want to forge a close relationship with a policy that was encountering such criticism (see Gellman, 2002).

Lautenberg (D-NJ), for example, claimed shortly after its release that, “This report seriously calls into question the value of the Homeland Security color-coded system” (Shenon, 2003m); criticising, as it did, the HSAS’ exorbitant costs to states and localities (Reese, 2003). Attesting again to the agency of particular documents in the HSAS story, Reese’s report was a product of his own initiative, spurred by the general impression that the HSAS was confusing people, including state and local governments (Reese, 2012, interview). “I took a look at the warning system,” he said, “and it seemed a little vague” (Reese, 2011, interview).<sup>71</sup>

Reese’s report was followed in February, 2004, by a hearing before the House Select Committee on Homeland Security: the first of two Congressional hearings on the HSAS, and examples of oversight proceedings that have become increasingly important in exercising control over US administrative practice (Fiorina, Peterson, Voss and Johnson, 2007). The chair of the first hearing, Representative Christopher Cox (R-CA), prefaced the proceedings by declaring that, “[the HSAS was] called into existence without the benefit of congressional action”, clearly critical of Bush’s use of a presidential directive to expedite the System (*Hearing* [Select Committee], 2004: 1). After discussing several limitations of the HSAS, especially the costs incurred by states and localities, the Hearing heard testimony from Deputy Secretary James Loy, who promised that the System’s alerts would become more specific to lessen such expenditure in the future. In this vein, the hearing discussed a First Responder bill, “which would allow for Federal Funds to support States and localities in covering the added costs associated with... changes in threat level” (*Hearing* [Select Committee], 2004: 64), but whilst this cleared the subcommittee, it failed in the House (see below).

The second hearing, before the House Subcommittee on National Security, Emerging Threats and International Relations, was convened one month later, and chaired by Representative Christopher Shays (R-CT). In addition to an Assistant DHS Secretary, Patrick Hughes (Figure 20) (whose testimony on the System demonstrated again the importance of material culture in the HSAS story), the committee heard testimony from homeland security experts including Shawn Reese (CRS), James Carafano

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<sup>71</sup> The significance of Reese’s report was attested to by the fact that it went through seven further editions (Reese, 2004a, 2004b, 2005a, 2005b, 2006, 2007, 2008). During the same period, the Advisory Panel to Assess Domestic Response Capabilities for Terrorism Involving Weapons of Mass Destruction (2003), convened in 1999 to assess the US’ ability to respond to WMD terrorism, commented on the System, too. Their recommendations were briefer than Reese’s, but agreed that alerts should become more geographically specific. Given the Commission’s mandate, it is perhaps surprising that they did not comment on the HSAS in their previous report of 2002, which was published well after the HSAS’ implementation in March of that year.

(Heritage Foundation), and Michael Wermuth (Rand Corporation). As such, we might see this hearing as indicative of Dalby's (1998: 296) suggestion that, "Much of the expertise for pronouncing on security is provided by Western political scientists", and part of what Morrissey (2011a: 436) has called, "the military-strategic studies complex... located in and around Washington, DC" (see Chapter 3). The thoughts of these three experts, perhaps because of their role as 'intellectuals of statecraft' within recognised organisations (Ó Tuathail, 1998), appeared to find favour with an admittedly sympathetic committee. All three witnesses had clear antipathy for the System (Carafano, 2011, interview; Reese, 2011; 2012, interviews; Wermuth, 2012, interview), and the latter's suggestion that the alerts be made more regionally specific was endorsed by the committee (Wermuth, 2004). After the witness statements, Hughes was requested, as Loy had been in the first hearing, to make the HSAS' alerts more geographically specific.



**Figure 20: Patrick Hughes testifies on the HSAS (Kravets, 2011)**

These two hearings did much to further official debate on the HSAS, especially the former, whose committee officially requested a report on the HSAS by the GAO through the person of the Committee's Chair, Representative Cox (Jenkins, 2012, interview). Whilst Reese's report was the first official review of the HSAS (Reese, 2011, interview), the GAO's (2004a) was the most thorough, running to 136 pages and nearly 50,000 words. It required the authors, William Jenkins and Debra Sebastian, to travel across the country over a period of several months, collecting various data on the HSAS and interviewing relevant federal, state and local officials



(Sebastian, 2012, interview). As with the first congressional hearing, the report stressed the high costs that were being incurred by states and localities. To reduce these, it suggested that each warning include specific threat guidance and information (Jenkins and Sebastian, 2004a). Its recommendations were disseminated through multiple briefings to Congress and federal agencies (Sebastian, 2012, interview), and within less than six weeks the HSAS was being used by the DHS for geographically specific alerts (DHS and FBI, 2004).

The possibility of using the HSAS to alert specific places had been noted in the System's founding document itself, HSPD-3 (2002), but it was only after congressional oversight that such changes were implemented. This curious political inertia was evidenced in June, 2003, when Tom Ridge spoke of his hope that the DHS would be able to use the HSAS geographically in the future (Shenon, 2003k). But Ridge was the Secretary of Homeland Security, so why the delay? The answer appears to lie in a combination of factors. Deputy Secretary Loy (2012, interview) recalls that, quite simply, in the DHS' early years, "The inbox was on fire everyday", and the department simply did not have time to make the System "surgical".<sup>72</sup> For his part, Ridge suggested that up until the first geographically specific alert, the intelligence being received by the DHS was simply not detailed enough to warrant such specificity (Ridge, 2004k). But this excuse is undermined by Ridge's request on April 5, 2004, "[for] transit operators and rail operators around the country to be on a heightened state of alert" (Ridge, 2004d), which he did not accompany with an HSAS warning of any stripe. Certainly, it appears that the impetus provided by the two congressional hearings in 2004 was what finally spurred the DHS to refine the System in this manner, and the first geographically specific alert was issued from August 1, 2004 to November 10, 2004; for financial services buildings in New York City, Northern New Jersey, and Washington, DC (DHS and FBI, 2004; Ridge, 2004k).

Whilst Secretary Ridge was responsible for the first of these new targeted alerts, Michael Chertoff, who would replace Ridge as DHS Secretary on February 15, 2005, issued the next two: the penultimate and ultimate HSAS threat level alterations. The first, from July 7, 2005 to August 12, 2005, was concerned only with the mass transit sector in the US (Chertoff, 2005b); and the second, from August 10, 2006 to August 13, 2006 (Chertoff, 2006; Chertoff et al., 2006), was in response to the capture of an

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<sup>72</sup> The use of medical metaphors by politicians to justify their actions and policies has been discussed elsewhere (Elden, 2007; Gregory, 2010; Ivie, 1999). Loy does not appear to have used this term in public, only in my interview, but it does suggest that he considered this aspect of the System's refinement beneficial; better protecting the American body politic, perhaps.

al Qaeda cell in London, planning attacks on flights to the US.<sup>73</sup> Chertoff was a former judge on the United States Court of Appeals, and his appointment had been controversial because of previous policy assertions on the detainment of Middle Eastern immigrants (Haulley, 2006). The new Secretary's position on the HSAS, though, seemed clear: he disliked the System (Freedman, 2005). In a collection of essays by Chertoff addressing all aspects of the homeland security effort, he did not mention the HSAS once (Chertoff, 2009) and immediately after taking up his post the Secretary invited homeland security advisors from every state to Washington to "discuss" the System (Chertoff, 2005c: 4). Given that Chertoff changed the threat level only twice after this, it seems that the product of these meetings was less further refinement of the System and more a decision to use the HSAS less over time (Mintz, 2005).

There are several reasons that might explain Chertoff's reluctance to engage with the HSAS. First, by the time of his appointment the HSAS had been heavily criticised by states, emergency workers and others. As such, Chertoff may have been distancing himself from an unpopular policy of his predecessor. Second, Chertoff was notably critical of the level of oversight that the DHS was forced to endure, which consisted of nearly 90 congressional committees and subcommittees (Chertoff, 2009). Staff assigned to testify at these, including the 2004 hearings, would have been better employed in other DHS duties actually devoted to public safety, he implied (Chertoff, 2009). By decreasing the visibility of one of the DHS' most controversial policies, which had already attracted two congressional hearings, Chertoff was reducing not only political flak, but also the DHS labour needed to combat such criticism. Third, the philosophy behind the HSAS was at odds with Chertoff's own view of the terrorist threat. By its very existence, the HSAS implied that all threats to the US could be calibrated and represented. Chertoff (2009: 6), on the other hand, believed that, "It is neither possible nor desirable to pursue a [total] risk elimination strategy [with regard to terrorism]."

Despite using the System just twice, though, Chertoff's alerts still echoed the inconsistencies that had dogged Ridge's tenure and demonstrated new slippages of security logic, too. First, both of Chertoff's alerts again blurred the distinction between pre-emption and retrospection, being issued after attacks had taken place rather than before. Second, his justification for the first alert breached the tenets of

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<sup>73</sup> For the press statements accompanying the decreases of each geographically specific HSAS alert, see, respectively: 6, DHS (2004c); 7, Chertoff (2005d); 8, DHS (2006b). After the eighth and final alert, the entire civilian air sector remained on a federally mandated Code Orange until the HSAS was repealed. This was also the alert that, to much public chagrin, prevented passengers from carrying liquids onboard aircraft (Chertoff, 2006).

HSPD-3 (2002), in stating that, “Currently, the United States has no specific, credible information suggesting an imminent attack here in the United States” (Chertoff, 2005b). When asked by a journalist why an alert was thus required, Chertoff suggested that al Qaeda had shown a tendency to attack multiple locations simultaneously (Chertoff, 2005b). In tone, then, this matched Rich Cooper’s (2012, interview) suggestion that, “when al Qaeda attack, they don’t just do one”, but by the time of this press conference many hours had elapsed since the London attacks. Third, despite the law requiring that the HSC and Chertoff determine the level, the Secretary implicitly devolved such authority for the eighth alert to UK authorities. “This adjustment”, Chertoff (2006) said at the time, “reflects the Critical, or highest, alert level that has been implemented in the United Kingdom.” In other words, the Secretary was not making the decision unilaterally, but following the lead of another sovereign state (Kirby, 2013).

Perhaps because of these continuing failures of security logic and Chertoff’s antipathy to the System, the HSAS’ eighth warning was its last. By 2006, more city officials thought that the System was ineffective than the opposite, with the majority simply indifferent (MacManus and Caruson, 2006; Reddick, 2007; 2011). And by 2007, the DHS’ strategic document, *National Strategy for Homeland Security*, appeared embarrassed to even mention the HSAS by name, despite it being one of the DHS’ most famous policies for so long (HSC, 2007). Instead, the strategy referred generically to “national systems to warn Americans” (HSC, 2007: 30). During this period, there were sporadic attempts to recall the System from its unofficial retirement and occasional recommendations for its improvement. In 2007, for example, Congressman Bennie Thompson (D-MI), for whom the HSAS appeared to be a particular cause of consternation (Thompson, 2008), introduced a bill, *Implementing the 9/11 Commission Recommendations Act* (2007), that included further provisions for reimbursing state and local costs associated with elevations. The bill passed both chambers and was enacted into law, but the sections pertaining to the System were ultimately redundant, as the HSAS was never used again.<sup>74</sup>

## **Conclusions**

Tom Ridge’s introduction of the HSAS in 2002 was optimistic in tenor: the Secretary had a system that would simplify, he thought, the process of terrorist warning. Within

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<sup>74</sup> Almost identical provisions had been requested in a previous House resolution, *Department of Homeland Security Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2006* (2005), but this did not pass (Freedman, 2005; Johnston, 2005; Kochems and Carafano, 2005), and was partially inspired by equally unsuccessful legislation of 2004 (Strohm, 2004). It was not until Thompson’s act that legal changes to the HSAS were effected (Cox, 2010).

months of its reception ‘on the ground’, though, the huge costs of the System were becoming apparent and shortly after this states began to dissent as the DHS’ ‘everywhere’ approach to homeland security came undone; contributing, in Rich Cooper’s (2012, interview) opinion, to the HSAS’ ultimate dissolution. Whilst the DHS did react to such criticisms by adding rigour to the decision making process with the Terrorist Threat Integration Center, instituting more sophisticated methods of intra-governmental communication, and eventually implementing geographically specific alerts, this evolution was simply too slow. By the time the HSAS had worked its way through the cogs of the federal bureaucracy and review process its credibility was on the wane, and the appointment of Michael Chertoff, who appeared to dislike the System from the outset, exacerbated this decline. For John Fenzel (2011, interview), who left his position with the DHS in mid-2002, the System’s pace of development after his own departure is a cause of regret. In an appropriate summary of the HSAS in official practice, Fenzel (2011. Interview) suggests that, “certainly, any system should change with the times, and the Homeland Security Advisory System didn’t [change quickly enough]”.

## 6. ‘Extraordinary ridicule’:

### The HSAS, satire and the geopolitics of humour

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Whilst the HSAS was being critiqued through official government channels, it was also being challenged within popular culture. The majority of these interventions construed the System as “a satirical piece” (Better signs, 2009), with the HSAS being “subject to extraordinary ridicule” (Brigham, 2005: 6), particularly from an entertainment media that has increasingly incorporated homeland security themes into its productions (Boyd, 2008). The popular late-night satire of Jon Stewart was one of the first to target the HSAS, but later the System was more rigorously deconstructed by humorists, with the Internet becoming a key site for its public ridicule, as well as television shows, movies and artistic productions. This comedic commentary frequently revealed a deep and critical engagement with the HSAS, as well as wider geopolitical issues. This included the relationship between the System and the war on terror at the broadest scale, but also the HSAS’ implicit corporeal claims at the level of the body: “the geography closest in” (Longhurst, 1994: 214). At the same time, consideration of HSAS humour – undertaken here principally through the insights of popular geopolitics – allows us to nuance governmentality-based approaches to homeland security (Martin and Simon, 2008), which, as we have seen, sometimes ignore the fact that, “people resisted, subverted and problematised these [governmental] programmes.” (Legg, 2005: 140). It thus highlights, in Ingram and Dodds’ words (2011: 64), “the ways in which humour and laughter may problematise counter-terror culture.”

#### 6.1 Jon Stewart, late-night comedy and humour after 9/11

The earliest satirical criticism of the HSAS was by late-night US talk shows specialising in the humorous deconstruction of recent political events (Shenon, 2003p), which have become increasingly important in defining US political culture in recent years (Achter, 2008). Comedy Central’s *The Daily Show with Jon Stewart* was notable amongst them, tackling the HSAS on the day of the System’s implementation: March 12, 2002 (Stewart and O’Neil, 2002). As one of the most effective forums for criticising the HSAS, in the opinion of Behnke (2012), as well as one of the first to do so, *The Daily Show* is a useful vehicle through which to begin to explore HSAS humour. *Saturday Night Live* (2002), Conan O’Brien (Lane, 2011; Ross, 2011) and Stephen Colbert (Colbert, Karlin and Stewart, 2009; 2011), for example, would all mock the System later, but did not engage as deeply or repeatedly with the HSAS as

Jon Stewart. At the same time, we should be careful to avoid the suggestion that *The Daily Show* ‘set the tone’ for HSAS humour in isolation. Dave Lippman (2012, interview), a professional comedian who has commented on the HSAS himself (see below), suggests that, “a lot of this material [on the HSAS] comes so naturally that many people write the same joke simultaneously.” Thus, it might be useful instead to conceptualise late-night humour about the HSAS as what Ridanpää (2009: 744) has called, “a process of negotiating the geopolitical order” – establishing what geopolitical events, policies and actions are funny, and whether they should be taken seriously by the public – and *The Daily Show* as a pertinent case study in understanding how the System was initially ‘negotiated’ in this fashion.<sup>75</sup>



**Figure 21: Jon Stewart (Rolling Stone, 2006)**

Addressing the productions of popular cultural outlets such as *The Daily Show* is important for other reasons, too. This thesis considers elsewhere the actions and beliefs of officials in relation to the System, but without disavowing the importance of these elites (as Chapter 3 discusses), it also wishes to stress that agency in geopolitics rests with other actors (Sharp, 1993), such as people going about their everyday lives (Dittmer, 2005; Driver, 2005; Sharp, 2000b). Popular ideas can reinforce, but also resist the geopolitical framings of political elites (Dodds, 2005), and the serious

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<sup>75</sup> Jon Stewart appears to have had an antipathy toward terror warnings prior to the HSAS, mocking an alert issued by John Ashcroft on October 30, 2001. However, at this time, perhaps because of the recentness of 9/11, Stewart criticised neither the alert itself, nor Ashcroft. Instead, the joke was at Stewart’s expense, as he laughed at his own fear of the alert (*The Daily Show*, 2001).

discourses and practices of the HSAS highlighted in the previous chapter were challenged here by an aspect of critical geopolitics, humour, that is encountering increasing attention (Dodds and Kirby, 2013; Purcell, Brown and Gokmen, 2010; Ridanpää, 2009). To emphasise this resistance the HSAS humour addressed here, as the title of the chapter attests, is considered 'satirical' because of this term's emphasis on critical commentary (Peterson, 2008). At the same time, as Dodds (2005) suggests, even critical popular interventions can be seen as naturalising and reproducing the 'geopolitical order' (and see, too, Atkinson and Dodds, 2000). The relationship of the popular culture addressed below to homeland security and the HSAS, then, should not be seen as uniformly resistant, even if it still opens up the opportunity for such resistance upon occasion (Ingram and Dodds, 2011).

To attend to this complexity, it is useful to begin by contextualising Jon Stewart's critique of the HSAS with reference to 9/11 and its effect on comedy; to demonstrate that his satire of the System, and that of many others, did not emerge unproblematically after those attacks. Paul Achter (2008: 274), for example, has suggested that, "For almost three weeks after the terrorist attacks in 2001, comedians in the U.S. embarked on an unusually serious assessment of comedy and its proper role in public life". This prompted a moment of pause by many, including Stewart, who aired re-runs of previous shows for two weeks (Achter, 2008; Kuipers, 2005), and perhaps reinforced 9/11 as a 'somatic marker' (Ó Tuathail, 2003), in that events were deemed so extraordinary regular broadcasting was suspended. At the same time, there were exceptions. The satirical online newspaper, *The Onion*, carried a piece about 9/11 just days after those attacks (Benacka, 2007), and the political television series, *The West Wing*, also aired a specially written episode within two weeks of the 9/11 that, whilst not overtly comedic, brought some levity to the period by interspersing reflections upon the attacks with running jokes about characters within the show (see Spigel, 2004). Achter's (2008) comment may capture a broad trend, but this was not without exceptions.

Within a month of 9/11, Spigel (2004) suggests that these exceptions were becoming more commonplace and that humour was increasingly re-emerging on late-night comedy shows such as Jon Stewart's. But if humour in general was on the rise, jokes that addressed 9/11 directly were still, it appears, problematic. Writing some twenty months after the attacks, Brunn (2004) stated that, "A certain sombreness and seriousness about the 11 September events pervades much of the American conscience". And this sombreness was reflected by the fact that although comedians such as Stewart were increasingly making jokes, their artistic licence had been at least partially restricted (Brunn, 2004). Thus, as Brunn (2004: 5) continues, "For several

months following 11 September those commentators, cartoonists, syndicated columnists and critical analysts of US domestic [security] policies... were effectively silenced by those calling for bipartisan and unqualified support of US leaders for the ‘war on terrorism’.” Again, I think we might question to whom the umbrella term, “those commentators”, refers. Presumably it does not include, for example, those compiling and reading *The Onion*, as mentioned. In the same vein, suggesting that humour was suppressed by “those” asking for “unqualified support” constructs not only another homogenous group, but ignores individual agency. As Dodds and Kirby (2013) note, people can police themselves with regard to what jokes they do and do not make, and whilst this might be partially determined by wider societal norms (Billig, 2005; Lockyer and Pickering, 2008), it is not simply instilled by an external other.

This is a brief overview of the context within which satirical denunciations of the HSAS appeared – a period in which understandings of global politics generally continued to be rethought (Carter and Dodds, 2010), especially through popular culture (Birkenstein, Froula and Randell, 2010) – and demonstrates the limit of the contention that jokes about domestic security during this period were “effectively silenced” (Brunn, 2004: 5). Upon its implementation, the HSAS was one of the most visible policies of the homeland security effort, but was still satirised by Jon Stewart. As the discussion of the media’s communication of the HSAS’ alerts in the previous chapter attests, it may be that, “the media tends to be supportive of the prevailing political and economic system and the foreign and domestic policies flowing from it” (Jackson, 2005: 169), but here this trend was bucked. Instead, the media, in the form of Comedy Central and Jon Stewart, provided what Dittmer (2010: 1) has called, “a space of geopolitical action”. At the same time, as we move into a more detailed discussion of Stewart’s humour, we should not overemphasise the effect of such satire. Mocking the HSAS was not the same as mocking the war on terror or 9/11 directly, as we shall see. Rather, the System provided an avenue to implicitly criticise the war on terror without becoming involved in the politically sensitive realm of the ongoing war effort itself. In this sense, such humour attests to what Bleiker (2006: 78) has called, “the relevance of art to the process of coming to terms with 9/11.” The DHS insisted that the HSAS was indicative of a larger whole, but the correlative of this was that it allowed satirists to use the System to proffer their own general remarks.

In the case of *The Daily Show*, these general remarks worked temporally as well as spatially. With reference to the first, Benacka (2007: 117) suggests that late-night satirists’ focus on the HSAS, including that of Jon Stewart, “casts collective judgment not only on the creation of the system itself, but also on its future efficacy to prevent



attacks.” Through the HSAS, “[satirists could] address temporality on multiple levels: the past (9/11), present (creation of the color-coding), and future (potential attacks)” (Benacka, 2007: 117). Jon Stewart’s criticism of the System on the day of the HSAS’ release both supports and nuances these claims. Talking directly to the audience in the manner of a ‘serious’ television host, Stewart deadpanned that, “you’ll want to consult [the HSAS] every morning to make sure your outfit matches your dread”, noting both the future orientation of the System, in that action now would benefit one in the future, and its emphasis on the present, in that one should know what the level was, every morning (Stewart and O’Neil, 2002). Nowhere in his sketch, though, did Stewart make explicit reference to 9/11. In this way, we might say that the efficacy of the HSAS as a target for humour was derived partially from the fact that it could be divorced, in this case temporally, from that sensitive event. At the same time, and demonstrating again the limits of humour’s ability to resist hegemonic norms, Stewart was arguably naturalising and domesticating the HSAS, too, through a form of ‘banal counterterrorism’ (see Chapter 3) that packaged a policy created by political elites and delivered it into the homes of American citizens.

After these temporal claims, Stewart yoked his satire of the HSAS to wider geopolitical events, thus stressing the geographies of the System, too. As a result of the HSAS, the host said, “we’re clearly winning the war on jargon” (Stewart and O’Neil, 2002). Certainly it would be overly speculative to suggest that in referencing the war on terror so obliquely, Stewart was denouncing that conflict entirely. What he was doing, though, was opening up homeland security policy to ridicule and providing a space of geopolitical action in Dittmer’s (2010) sense. By linking this geographically to the wider war on terror he contributed, as well, to the negotiation of what could and could not be laughed at during this period (Ridanpää, 2009). We might see his connection between a domestic security policy and the ‘war on jargon’ as an attempt to collapse the binary opposition between events at home and abroad within the war on terror. But whilst this global perspective might have helped to emplace the homeland security effort within its wider set of geopolitical relations, it also reproduced the kinds of security logics that the DHS itself had been promoting with the HSAS. In these logics, domestic security policies pertaining to public safety were connected to conflict abroad and thus justified the latter in the process (see Chapter 5). And this was reinforced by Stewart’s use of the word, “we”, which invoked the ‘imagined community’ of the US in opposition to an enemy other.

Jon Stewart’s critique of the HSAS in the show of March 12, 2002, also addressed the HSAS’ effect on people, particularly that of its colours. After finishing his ‘war on jargon’ monologue, Stewart, in character as a television anchor, took his audience

“live to our own Matt Walsh on the streets of New York, seeing firsthand the effects of this brand new colour coded warning system” (Stewart and O’Neil, 2002). Walsh, with a traffic light at green in the background, replies, “Jon, there is an eerie calm here; a serenity that has not been felt for months” (Stewart and O’Neil, 2002). Of course, no sooner has Walsh spoken than the lights change and Walsh, thinking that the traffic light represents the HSAS’ actual level, exclaims, “Jon! We’re now at severe [Code Red] alert” (Stewart and O’Neil, 2002). Stewart appears concerned, before realising the reporter’s error and correcting him. We might note, though, that colours were originally included in the HSAS’ design because of the belief that a large proportion of the American population would intuitively understand that ‘red’ meant danger and ‘green’ safety (Byrne, 2012, interview). Stewart’s joke was at the expense of a reporter who had failed to differentiate between the HSAS’ colours and those of a traffic light, but it also reinforced the Western-centric logic that the DHS had used in selecting colours in the first place (see Gage, 1995). The joke was not that a red traffic light did not mean danger, but that it meant a different kind of danger than that the DHS intended: the threat of a traffic accident, rather than the threat of a terrorist attack.

From this edition onward, the HSAS became a recurring motif on the *The Daily Show*, especially when the System was newsworthy, such as when the threat level was changed. And Stewart’s satire continued to reflect upon wider geopolitical issues through the HSAS, such as the linkage between the domestic and foreign spheres of the war on terror. After the HSAS’ second elevation, in which possible military action in Iraq was explicitly refuted by the DHS as a motivation for the change (Ridge, Ashcroft and Mueller, 2003), Stewart said, “Thank goodness, because I want that [imminent] war to remain pure and uncorrupted” (Stewart and O’Neil, 2003a). Thus, the HSAS was used a springboard to set a tenor of cynicism with which Stewart could address the wider war on terror. And in later shows, Stewart often asked guests their opinion of the HSAS in the more serious sections of the programme (Stewart and O’Neil, 2003b; 2003c; 2003d; 2004; 2005a; 2005b), rather than those dedicated to jokes. In this way, Stewart both developed his critique of the HSAS, but also further naturalised the System. It became a comedy staple, but a staple nonetheless. Thus, his HSAS ‘routine’ did exactly what that term suggests: it contributed to an everyday geography of homeland securitisation (Amoore, 2009a).

Stewart’s criticisms of the HSAS came to a natural crescendo in 2005 when Tom Ridge, then recently departed as DHS Secretary, appeared for the first time as a guest on *The Daily Show*. Stewart interrogated Ridge about the HSAS immediately, asking with his first question, “colour coded terror chart, seriously? What were you

thinking?” (Stewart and O’Neil, 2005a). The Secretary responded with a quip about the colour of his tie, but judging by the reaction of the audience, his attempt at humour fell flat; it ‘bombed’ (Dodds and Kirby, 2013). If Ridge’s body language and business attire had contributed to the prestige of the System upon its introduction in 2002, his appearance and slightly uncomfortable manner here achieved the opposite; especially when compared to the svelte Stewart, who had accustomed himself to his role over many years. The episode was the culmination of Stewart’s attacks on the System – he would mention it little after this, as it was soon to be unofficially retired – and in many ways reflected how utterly vexed the host was with the HSAS by this point. For Stewart, the System had become such a motif on his show that he could ask little else of the man that had implemented the HSAS than, ‘why, Tom?’ The satirical negotiation of the System by *The Daily Show* was over and it was a negotiation that as well as being critical had wedded, with the help of Ridge’s tie, the failure of the HSAS to the Secretary himself.

## **6.2 Tom Ridge’s negotiation of humour and the HSAS in cyberspace**

By 2005 and his appearance on *The Daily Show*, Secretary Ridge had clearly been defeated in his attempts to stop the HSAS being defined by many as a satirical object, but in the years before he had more purposefully attempted to ‘negotiate’ HSAS humour (Ridanpää, 2009). Central to the Secretary’s negotiation was the ‘line’ he drew between ‘good’ and ‘bad’ taste, which was especially clear after the anthrax attacks of late 2001. Referring to hoaxers who sent out fake ‘anthrax’ packages at this time – which actually contained innocuous powders such as flour – Ridge (2009: 43) stated in apparent irritation that, “some Americans looked at this horrifying situation as a perfect time to play practical jokes”. Other events, though, were funnier in the Secretary’s opinion. “I was (understandably) satirized”, Ridge (2009: xiv) recalled, “when I suggested years ago that Americans ought to have duct tape in their houses”; referring to a document released with the HSAS’ second threat level change, which impractically suggested that home-owners seal their entire houses with duct tape in the event of a biological attack (Reynolds, 2003).<sup>76</sup> With specific reference to the HSAS, too, Ridge (2009: 81) stated that, “I’ve always believed that humor is an effective means of communicating difficult subjects. But there is a difference between humor and ridicule and, at times, the line was crossed.”

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<sup>76</sup> The episode was later satirised in the film, *Right at your door* (West and Smith, 2006), in which the only persons to be killed after a biological attack are those that actually used such tape. The implication of the movie, then, was that homeland security policy and practice does more to harm the national good than the reverse.

Before the System had even been unveiled, John Fenzel (2011, interview) had warned the homeland security leadership that the HSAS, “because of the colours, would come up on the Tonight Show, [and] Jay Leno”; that it might become, in Mike Byrne’s (2012, interview) words, “late night TV grist”. “But there was a need seen, nonetheless, to include the colours in the system” (Fenzel, 2011, interview); presumably for the reasons discussed in Chapter 4, including their intuitiveness. Ridge, then, had to find a balance between condemning and endorsing the sentiments of later satirists: the former potentially leading to even greater mockery and the latter to the dissolution of the System entirely. As such, Ridge engaged with humour to an extent, but fell back upon the safer ground of serious comment when he felt that the comedy had gone too far. In so doing, Ridge invoked what Morreal (1989) has called the traditional notion within Western serious thought that humour is irrational and pointless; often requiring the denigration of others to succeed. Ridge believed that satire of the HSAS might have some benefits, such as communication and education (see above), but that eventually such ridicule obscured the System’s serious purpose of facilitating public safety.

This belief was exemplified in a letter that Ridge wrote to the *Wall Street Journal* after that newspaper published an article critical of the HSAS by David Wessel. Compared to jokes that were to come (see below), Wessel’s article was tame, but one line in particular seemed to irk the Secretary: “Terrorism is no joke,” Wessel said, “but Mr. Ridge’s color-coded warnings have done more to stimulate late-night comedians than to give Americans much guidance in girding for another attack.” Presumably Ridge agreed with the first clause, but clearly not the second, and he entitled his reply in the newspaper’s letters page, “Very funny; Now, please pay attention” (Letters to the editor, 2002). Ridge’s ‘line’, it seems, had been crossed.<sup>77</sup> In actual fact, the Secretary suggested, “The humor of late-night TV shows has helped inform millions of Americans about the Homeland Security Advisory System... one would have thought that the Journal would show more professionalism by educating Americans about the system. Instead, you laughed it off.” (Letters to the editor, 2002: A19). Ridge was negotiating HSAS humour, just as Stewart and Wessel had, but in an attempt to protect rather than denigrate the System. The episode illustrated, too, how popular culture can intersect with government practice through affectivity. To cite Dittmer’s (2010) typology of affect again, the humour of late-night comedians ‘resonated’ with Wessel and was then ‘amplified’ by his news article, ultimately

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<sup>77</sup> And we might note again the spatiality of this term, and how emotion was negatively positioned relative to serious thought as with the comments of Flint (2001) and Agnew (2001) in Chapter 3.

bringing it to the attention of Ridge and affecting the Secretary to such an extent that he issued a public response.

At the same time, Ridge implemented a wider publicity campaign that partially counteracted such representations (Ridge, 2009). Central to this effort was the entertainment industry, attesting to the oft-cited link between the US' political and entertainment spheres (Der Derian, 2005; Philpott and Mutimer, 2005; Scott, 2000; Shapiro, 2009). Whilst the DHS, in Ridge's (2009: 181) opinion, "had no intention of interfering with the creative aspect of these efforts [the Department did want] to get the word out [about homeland security]". To this end, ABC, with DHS support, commissioned the reality television series, *Homeland Security USA* (Ridge, 2009), and the Department's Homeland Security Advanced Research Projects Agency gave behind-the-scenes assistance to shows including CBS crime drama, *CSI: Miami* (Turse, 2009). The television series, *24*, which gave perhaps the most favourable coverage to the System of any popular representation, was also endorsed by the DHS (Ingram and Dodds, 2009) (and because of its importance is considered separately below).<sup>78</sup> In this way, homeland security again echoed Cold War civil defence, during which officials contacted various influential figures in Hollywood, "to mobilize the voluntary activities of the nation's actors, artists, musicians, and writers for civil defense" (Kerr, 1983: 18; and see, too, Blanchard, 1986).

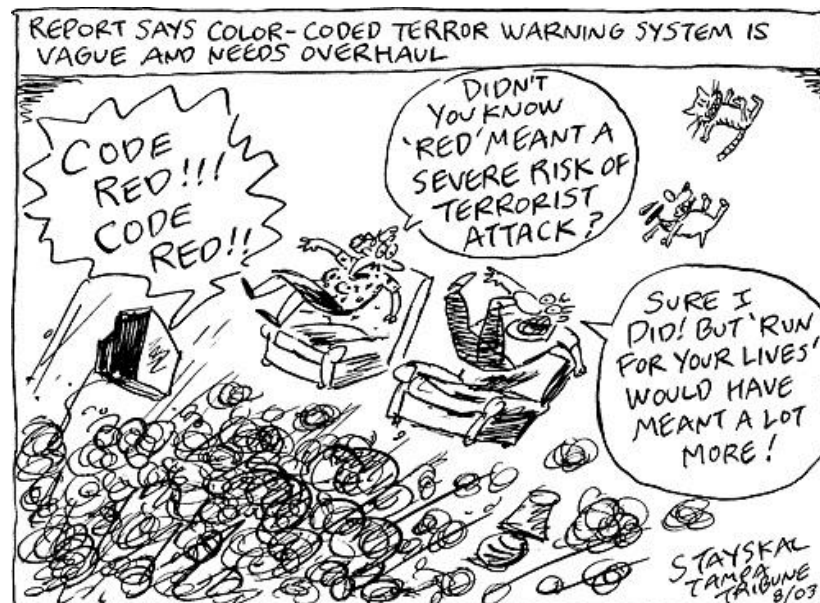


Figure 22: Code Red, Code Red (Stayskal, 2003)

<sup>78</sup> A television film was produced, *Homeland Security* (Binkowski and Townsend, 2004), which looked favourably upon the DHS, but the proposed television spinoff was cancelled due to poor ratings.

Yet neither Ridge's letter, nor his support for favourable representations of the DHS and the System within popular culture, prevented further mockery of the HSAS. Thus, although one might say that there exists a 'military-industrial-media-entertainment network' (Der Derian, 2001: xi; and see, too, Der Derian, 1998), the efficacy of this network to those in power is not always certain. In addition to the satire discussed above, newspapers began to run cartoons pertaining to the System. As with Stewart's references to the System, these often appeared after notable events in the HSAS story. Wayne Stayskal, for example, a cartoonist for the *Tampa Tribune*, built upon Shawn Reese's suggestion in his 2003 CRS report that the HSAS was vague by suggesting the day after the report's release that there were not enough guidelines for citizens to follow at Code Red (Figure 22), and no letter from Tom Ridge followed. By 2004, the former counterterrorist expert for Presidents Bill Clinton and George W. Bush, Richard Clarke, could say on CNN (2004) that the HSAS was "a laughingstock", and attract no opprobrium either. "Once the system began to lose credibility," in Shapiro and Cohen's (2007: 122) opinion, "the media treated it less seriously, further eroding its credibility and producing a self-reinforcing cycle." And elsewhere, particularly online, this cycle was particularly powerful.

A few simple tests offer an indication of how thoroughly satire of the HSAS permeated the Internet, and continues to do so. Using the three largest online search engines – Google, Bing and Yahoo! (SEO Consultants, 2010) – image returns were analysed for the terms 'Homeland Security Advisory System' and 'Color coded alert'; terms that were discovered, after trial and error, to yield the greatest number of results given that not all sources refer to the HSAS by its official title. Over 1,000 images pertaining to the HSAS were returned across the three search engines, and of these an average of nearly 25% were satirical; in other words, they altered the HSAS' official colour-coded representation in some way for comedic effect. Whilst this is an indication only and subject to the limitations of online resources discussed in Chapter 3, these trends do suggest that a high proportion of the HSAS-related images that an Internet user might have seen online would have been satirical. In this way, they provide an insight into how everyday audiences might have received this particular popular geopolitics in this particular forum (Dittmer and Gray, 2010). Moreover, online satire of the HSAS demonstrated not only that people found the System amusing, but what exactly they found so funny: the System's puerility, adaptability, and capacity to reflect upon partisan political issues.

The first, construing the HSAS as a childish policy (Brigham, 2005), was achieved through mockery of the System's aesthetic: five simple blocks of colour, without the gradation and sophistication of the complete colour spectrum (Brigham, 2011, interview). In 2004, for example, McNett (2004) lampooned the System by consolidating each colour with appropriately tinted Sesame Street characters (similar to other adaptations below). Elsewhere, the online satirist, Jonny Walker Comedy (2007), created a farcical song in which the HSAS was used to teach children the colours of the rainbow (Figure 23), and comparisons were often made between the HSAS and Crayola colouring pencils (CAP News, 2007; Humor Gazette, 2011; Terror alert system, 2009). Often these were online, on websites such as YouTube, and thus demonstrated what Christensen (2008: 155) has called in this regard, "Uploading dissonance". Of course, although the HSAS was construed in this way, the commentators were all adults and directed their jokes toward adult audiences. Thus, the System's humorousness here stemmed partly from the fact that it was out of place; a government policy that should be serious and adult, but was actually the opposite. In this way, the HSAS was both amusing in itself, but also amusing because it was amusing; an example of incongruity humour theory in that one found amusement where one would not expect to find it, and superiority theory, in that adults could look down upon the System as childish and laugh accordingly (Morreal, 1989). Such humour chimed, too, with criticisms of the President that had signed-off on the System; a President who was often mocked for his apparent simplicity and his reduction of complex ideas into basic forms (Frank, 2004).



**Figure 23: Kermit and the rainbow (Jonny Walker Comedy, 2007)**

The second major trend in online satire replaced the HSAS' levels for comedic effect. As Behnke (2012: 110) has stated, "The very lack of any reference, of any 'signified' in terms of concrete information about potential terrorist attacks [in the HSAS], opened a space for ridicule", which many comedians appeared eager to fill by adapting the System. The syndicated cartoonist, Dan Piraro, for example, created the 'Japanese Homeland Security Advisory System', with levels from 'contaminated sushi' (Code Green) to 'Godzilla' (Code Red) (Santoso, 2009) (Figure 24). Elsewhere, the levels 'low' through 'severe' were replaced with other scales, including: frankfurters, from 'tofu pup' to 'danger dog' (Kravets, 2011); wall paints, from 'daiquiri' to 'rococco' (Singel, 2008); national stereotypes, from 'run' to 'hide' for the French government, because of their perceived lack of military prowess (Schneier, 2011); zombies (Pedersen, 2007), which have enjoyed a renaissance in popular culture in recent years (Saunders, 2012); signs of the Rapture, from 'low' to 'high' risk of Judgment Day (Flagstein, 2010); snakes, to mark the release of the film, *Snakes on a Plane* (2006) (Cafe Press, 2010); and, with a clever nod to both the System's origins and its late night critics – whether intentional or not – types of bear, from 'Care Bear' to 'Colbert', with 'Smokey' in the middle (Kravets, 2011).

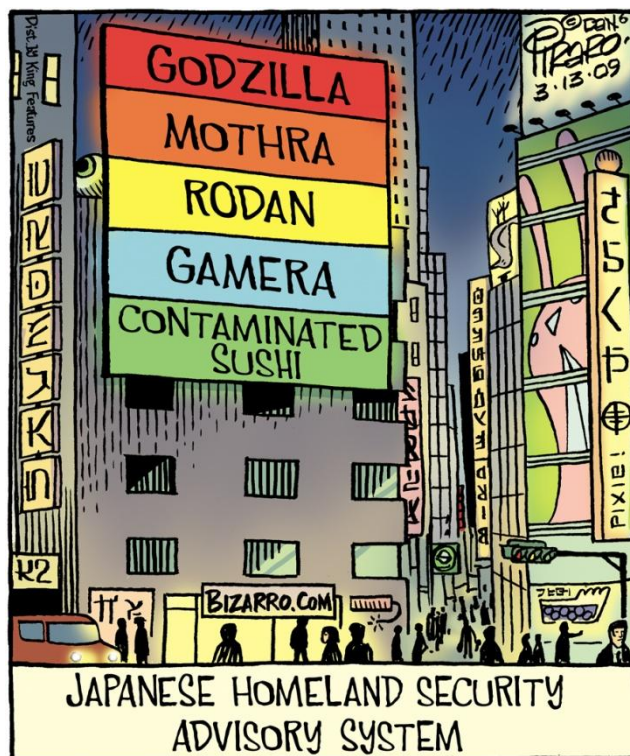


Figure 24: Japanese HSAS (Piraro, 2012, pers. comm)



For his part, Dan Piraro (2011, interview), the cartoonist responsible for the Japanese HSAS, has suggested that his artwork had no explicitly political overtures, “it just seemed like a funny way to parody that entire system.” Piraro, though, may be underselling his work. By mocking a government policy at all he was making a political statement and Piraro (2011, interview) continues that the creation of the Japanese HSAS stemmed from a belief in the limitations of homeland security. Certainly, though, some satirical representations were more explicitly political than others. Piraro (2011, interview) selected Japanese movie monsters because he thought that this was a witty comparison, but Behnke (2010), with reference to the ‘frankfurter alert’, has suggested that this theme intentionally satirised the notion that ‘gut feelings’ could assist in the assessment of terrorist threats; posited upon occasion by both President Bush and Secretary Chertoff. Flagstein’s (2010) ‘rapture’ system, too, might be seen as a political take on premillennial dispensationalists – a Christian minority that during Bush’s presidency showed a marked tendency toward interpreting geopolitical events through the rubric of evangelical theology (Dittmer, 2009) – and Bush’s often evangelical presidential style (Frank, 2004; Remes, 2010).



**Figure 25: 'We might have to disrupt the democratic process' (Fiore, 2004)**

Whilst these two types of HSAS satire had political overtures, they are differentiated here from those that had explicitly partisan concerns and which criticised, for example, the Republicans’ strict immigration policies (Reilly, 2011); the Bush administration’s redaction of important documents in the war on terror (Wade, 2004); and the HSAS itself, through connection to its wider geopolitical associations

(Brucker-Cohen, 2010; Fiore, 2004; Ze Frank, 2004).<sup>79</sup> The latter can be differentiated by the scales at which they approached the HSAS. For Fiore (2004) and Brucker-Cohen (2010), the HSAS was a policy with nationwide ramifications. Thus, Fiore (2004) reflects upon the contradictions of the homeland security effort by interspersing animated shots of Ridge with annotations such as, “We might have to disrupt the democratic process because terrorists want to disrupt the democratic process” (Figure 25).<sup>80</sup> For Amoores (2006: 347), this particular sketch “[unsettles the] ubiquity and ordinariness [of homeland security policies, such as the HSAS], making them extraordinary and open to question.” And Brucker-Cohen (2010) seeks to unsettle such policies, too, especially their intersection with the national media. Brucker-Cohen’s online satire, ‘Homeland Insecurity Advisory System’, “allowed for the individual major US news sources to be rated according to their support level for or against the US Government’s actions” (Brucker-Cohen, 2010, pers. comm.), in an attempt to demonstrate the media’s imbrication with the homeland security effort (see Chapters 5 and 7). Both suggested, then, that the HSAS was emblematic of the challenges being faced by American democracy in the age of the ‘war on terror’.

Ze Frank’s satirical short film, *Red alert* – in which the comedian assumed the role of the System’s lead designer – shared these concerns, but reflected upon them through a consideration of the HSAS’ intersection with the embodied geopolitics of the war on terror (Hyndman, 2003). The System’s colours “actually corresponded”, in his opinion, “to the skin colour that the terrorists would most likely be on a given day” (Frank, 2004). And when a member of the HSAS’ fictional design team suggested adding purple, “[John] Ashcroft told us that the gay Teletubby/ Tinky Winky issue was a little too hot to handle” (Frank, 2004). Adding to the gendered and sexualised connotations of these comments, Frank (2004) referred to the HSAS as ‘his ass’, rather than ‘aitch sass’, throughout. Holding an active dislike for the System (Gage, 2004), Ze Frank recalls that, “I imagined it as a kind of tool to justify the continuation of the PATRIOT Act; a continuation of acts of violence that were perpetrated against countries that were only in the very loosest ways tied to September 11” (Frank, 2011, interview). In so doing, Frank (2004) drew attention to the fact that the HSAS, like the war on terror more widely, has been overwhelmingly targeted at certain non-

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<sup>79</sup> Only a single example of HSAS satire with a Republican agenda has been found, perhaps because of the negative associations of the System with the GOP. The political blogger, Just a Regular Guy (2009), replaced the HSAS’ five levels with Democratic politicians he disliked: Code Red (Nancy Pelosi), Orange (Harry Reid), Yellow (John Kerry), Blue (Ted Kennedy) and Green (Hillary Clinton). He accompanied these with critical annotations, including “run” for Ted Kennedy, which referred to the Chappaquiddick incident wherein Kennedy abandoned the scene of a traffic accident after his passenger had been killed.

<sup>80</sup> This is a paraphrasing of comments made by Ridge during 2004 (Davis and Silver, 2004; Ridge, 2004c).

white bodies (Puar, 2006). We might contrast Ze Frank's perspicacious comment about Ashcroft to Bush's removal of the colour white from the System's original design, too. In truth, a colour had been omitted from the System's design because of its perceived femininity, but it was white not purple, and the President rather than the Attorney General that was responsible (Fenzel, 2011, interview).

### **6.3 Gender, race and the body: beyond the image**

The connection between the HSAS and gender, race and the body was also commented upon elsewhere, supporting Ingram's (2011: 218) claim that, "the question of the body is intrinsic to the whole post-9/11 security problematic." This satire included musical productions, artistic installations, protests and poetry; attesting to the importance of aural geopolitics, as well as that rendered through visual means (Pinkerton, 2005; 2007; 2008). As Bleiker (2006: 87) says, musical activities have been some of the most "intensive engagements with 9/11", and two of the HSAS' pre-eminent satirists were the American singers, Dave Lippman (2004) and John Craigie (2007).<sup>81</sup> Lippman's single, 'Color coded alerts', features on the eighth of his albums, *Singing CIA agent George Shrub live in Manhattan, Kansas* (2004). In the song, Lippman adopts his alter ego, the titular Shrub; a thinly-veiled impersonation and pun of George H. W. Bush (Lippman, 2011, interview). 'Color coded alerts' is presented as ironic HSAS guidance, specifically shopping advice, and mocks George W. Bush's recommendation after 9/11 that Americans should continue shopping to keep the US economy moving (Lippman, 2011, interview). Thus for Lippman (2004), "The base level is green, so it's perfectly safe; you're free to go shopping." But by Code Red, "your shopping decisions will be made for you by the consumer decisions division of the Department of Homeland Security". Lippman thus invokes a banal geopolitics that in addition to inverting the System's masculine logics through connection to a stereotypically female pursuit, draws attention to the fact that, as mentioned previously, the war on terror has arguably been partially fought to secure the neoliberal global economy (Morrissey, 2011b).

Craigie's (2007) satire is different in style, but also plays with notions of gender and, to a greater extent than Lippman, family. In intonation and sound, Craigie emulates Bob Dylan, and he treats his subject matter in a similar, folksy style. Thus, in a presumably apocryphal story based upon the HSAS' fifth change, Craigie retells how he was driving past Los Angeles airport on Christmas Eve on his way to his parents'

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<sup>81</sup> The contemporary jazz collective, Threat Level-3 (2008), have also released a track entitled, 'Orange Alert'. This piece is instrumental, though, which is why it is not focussed upon here.

house for dinner, when a radio broadcast tells him that a Code Orange has been issued. Upon arrival, Craigie (2004) debates with his parents the efficacy of the alert, suggesting that, “maybe this whole orange alert thing was just a big old scam”. His parents seem to agree and the family refuses to let the alert ruin their Christmas. Instead, they go outside and sing carols on their front lawn. Like Lippman, Craigie’s song undercuts and mocks the System’s aggressive, masculinist dimensions by relating it to the gentle and domestic: a traditional, American family unit simply trying to meet up and enjoy the holiday season. In other popular representations, the heterosexual family unit is the bedrock of the US’ war on terror (Puar, 2006) – such as the film, *World Trade Center* (Borman et al., 2006), and the television series, *24* (below) – but here it is a vehicle through which the homeland security imperatives of the same are critiqued and devalued. At the same time, of course, Craigie reiterates the importance of this unit to American identity, even if this is to resist the directives of government rather than support them.<sup>82</sup>

The implicit connection of the HSAS with masculine concerns was even more savagely satirised by female artists and activists, including the West Coast artist, Amy Franceschini, in her creation, ‘Homeland Security Blanket’; and the female-led anti-war group, Code Pink, whose very name was a satire of the HSAS and would go on to feature the System regularly in their campaigns (Weil, 2011, interview). Both critiqued not only the gendered language of the war on terror and thus what Jackson (2005: 157) has called, “its reflections of traditional patriarchal male-female roles”, but also traditional notions that only men possess the requisite decisiveness to engage with international politics (Enloe, 1989). Together, they posited a ‘feminist geopolitics’, which developed “a politics of security at multiple scales”; from the global level to that of the body (Hyndman, 2003: 3). In so doing, they created what Hyndman (2004: 307) has called elsewhere, “a theoretical and political space in which geopolitics becomes a more gendered and racialized project, one that is epistemologically situated and embodied in its concept of security.” The first of these projects is focussed upon here, before the section concludes with a consideration of the HSAS’ racial connotations.

Amy Franceschini’s Homeland Security Blanket was first displayed in San Francisco, before being transferred to New York’s Museum of Modern Art (Future Farmers,

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<sup>82</sup> As with online mockery, some non-visual satire adopted a more right-wing tone. Ron White (2009), a stand-up comedian, suggested that at Code Orange one should assess the danger a person posed by how Islamic their name sounded, before erroneously implying that Muslims wear turbans. The reason that such commentary is not foregrounded in this chapter is not because of its offensiveness, but because it represents such an exception to the dominant trend of HSAS humour, which criticised the System.

2002). Composed of canvas, silkscreen, thread, wool, wire and LEDs, the Blanket “reacted” wirelessly to alterations of the HSAS threat level by changing temperature (Franceschini, 2011, interview). Attesting to the importance of artistic installations, which have recently attracted increased attention in popular geopolitics (Ingram, 2009; 2011), Lacy (2008: 96) calls the Blanket, “an ironic comment on the breaking down of the interior and exterior”; linking the ‘safety’ of domestic space with the ‘danger’ of the external. As Amy Franceschini (2011, interview) says herself, “I think the thing that really inspired me was I’d gotten a letter from the Department of Homeland Security that said... what to be fearful of [in the wake of the anthrax attacks]”; a letter that, by being delivered directly to a person’s home, blurred the divide between domestic and national security. In addition, the Blanket was an ironic counterpoint to the notion that ‘comforter’ was the proper role for women in international politics (Enloe, 1989), and stressed the importance of materiality and objects in the creation and communication of geopolitical knowledge. The Blanket’s materiality, including its canvas and wire, was not just “central to the production of, organization, and performance of state power” (Meehan et al., 2013: 1), but also the contestation of that same power. In this sense, we might see the Blanket as a riposte to the non-human networks which communicated the HSAS level officially (discussed in the previous chapter), and reiterate that ‘tactile vision’ can also be used to undermine, not only support the imperatives of the DHS (*pace* Amooore, 2007).<sup>83</sup>

In the case of Code Pink, the connection of the HSAS with feminist geopolitics through satire was stated even more explicitly. The group’s name was not just a spoof of the HSAS (Featherstone, 2003) – invoking a stereotypically female colour in favour of the System’s actual colours, which had been selected by men, of course (Chapter 4) – but inspired by the HSAS itself (Weil, 2011, interview). As the group’s co-founder, Media Benjamin (2012, interview), has recalled with regard to the creation of the group, “it was really just sitting around [with other activists] talking about those color-coded alerts that made us realize how ridiculous this whole [war on terror] thing [was].” And it was a moment of laughter that expedited the process, too, which we might contrast to the moment of tension and confusion that created the HSAS in the first place (Chapter 4). “We laughed...”, Benjamin recalls, “about all of this male testosterone that was flying around from Osama bin Laden to George Bush to Saddam Hussein... it really was very spontaneous and in response to that color-coded alert idea.” If categories such as gender have traditionally been overlooked by affectual geographies (Sharp, 2009), the origins of Code Pink attest to their

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<sup>83</sup> Other artworks made similar statements to Franceschini’s work later, including Paul Davies’ Homeland Security Vest (Regine, 2005), and Chrissy Consonant’s own Homeland Security Blanket (Kahn, 2004).

importance; with regard to the geopolitics of humour, in particular (Dodds and Kirby, 2013).



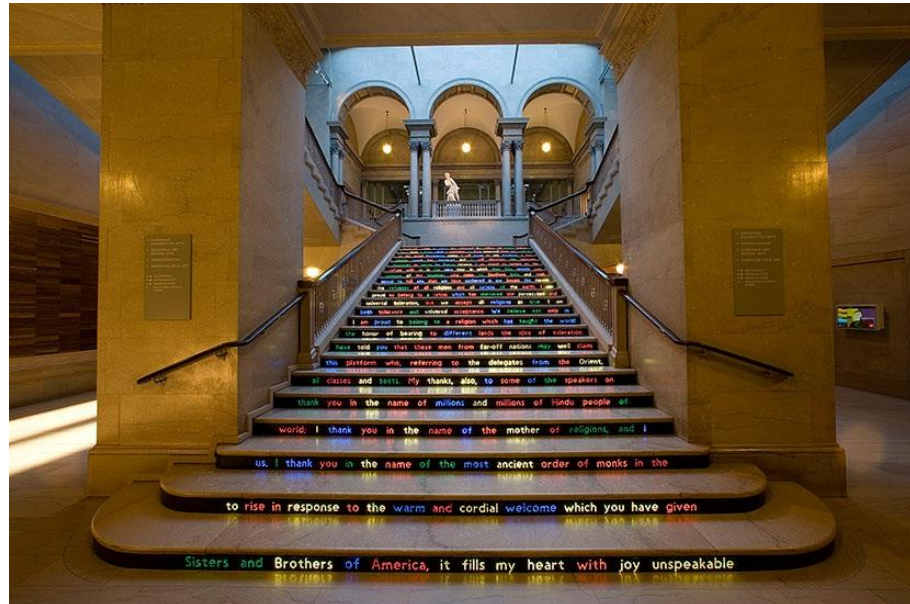
**Figure 26: ‘Pinking up’ (Code Pink, 2013)**

To contest official representations of the HSAS, Code Pink practiced their satirical adaptation of the System whenever and wherever possible. As group spokesperson, Janet Weil (2011, interview), has stated, this included encouraging members to wear pink clothing, which the group describes as ‘pinking up’; the creation of large banners “that were made to look like pink [redundancy] slips”, with particularly disfavoured homeland security officials appended; and the use of the colour as a protest tool, as on International Women’s Day, 2003, “when we celebrated women as global peacemakers with a week of activities, rallies and a march to encircle the White House in pink.” (Code Pink, nd).<sup>84</sup> To focus attention upon the embodied repercussions of homeland security policies such as the HSAS, then, the latter juxtaposed the pure white of the President’s residence with the vibrant fuschia of Code Pink. Elsewhere in the war on terror, women were being “subverted by their political role”; used as justification for intervention in the misogynist spaces of Afghanistan and Iraq, for example (Hunt and Rygiel, 2006: 1). Here, though, the

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<sup>84</sup> There is also evidence of the HSAS being used at protests elsewhere. The website, Craigs List (2003), features photographs of anti-Iraq war protests with banners exclaiming, “Code orange alert – our president is an evil ass”, and “Red alert- Bush is dangerous”. Such protests inverted the System’s security logic by basing the HSAS level upon the threat posed by America, rather than al Qaeda or Iraq.

'role' that women could perform was reclaimed and rather than facilitating the Bush administration's war on terror the conflict was undermined.<sup>85</sup>



**Figure 27: Public Notice 3 (Exhibition Inquisition, 2010)**

If gender was one way that the body was problematised with respect to the HSAS, race was the other major theme in satire of the System. Despite being created to represent all terrorist dangers, the HSAS only ever responded to Islamist threats, especially those affiliated with al Qaeda (Kirby, 2013). The HSAS did not change, for example, after threats from William Krar, a white supremacist and bomb-maker (Department of Justice, 2007; Jackson, 2004); Eric McDavid, convicted in 2006 of conspiracy to commit domestic terrorism (Department of Justice, 2007); or Jared Loughner, who shot and killed six people in early 2011, injuring Congresswoman Gabrielle Giffords in the process (Lacey and Herszenhorn, 2011). All were white, all were politically motivated, and all were terrorists by any reasonable definition, but because of their particular political affiliations they did not register on the HSAS (Schneier, 2004). Indeed, even the Fort Hood shootings of 2009, perpetrated by an Islamist US army officer, did not trigger an HSAS alert. In this sense, the HSAS' security logics appeared to incorporate only the threat from Islamist terrorists that were actively involved with an international organisation based abroad. Grewal

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<sup>85</sup> Janet Weil (2011, pers. comm.) has also written a poem on the HSAS entitled, 'Reclaiming Orange', which replaces the bellicose and masculine associations of the System with others of a more pacific persuasion, such as the colour of pumpkin costumes on Halloween, as well as, "apricots, peaches, mandarins, persimmons". In this way, Weil's satire partially derives its power from the System's adaptability, discussed above.

(2006) has suggested that, “The discourse of security in this war on terror suggests that the greatest danger is from the outside”, and whilst this might be reappraised in the wake of the Boston Marathon bombings, the HSAS, for its part, readily conformed in this respect.

At the same time, race was not only important in determining the HSAS level, but in its reception. Eisenman et al. (2009) have found that knowledge of the HSAS and terrorism was differentiated by racial group, with politically conservative white males having some of the lowest perceptions of risk from terrorism and non-white groups, the reverse (Eisenman et al., 2009: 168); a somewhat ironic finding given that radio and television hosts such as Bill O’Reilly – white, male and conservative – have been some of the shrillest exaggerators of the terrorist threat (Dittmer and Dodds, 2008).<sup>86</sup> Indian artist Jitish Kallat explored this overlap in his 2003 installation at the Art Institute of Chicago, *Public Notice 3*. Adapting the Institute’s grand staircase, Kallat illuminated words on each step in the five colours of the HSAS (Figure 27). The words were Swami Vivekananda’s, a Hindu monk who spoke at the World’s Fair in Chicago in 1893 and called for the pursuit of peace, love and prosperity across religious divides (Unplugged, nd). Thus, Kallat matched the incongruous words of a 19<sup>th</sup> century Hindu with a 21<sup>st</sup> century icon of domestic security, to demonstrate how the modern day West might benefit from Eastern intervention, despite President Bush’s apparent belief in the reverse. By ensuring physical contact with his installation through the staircase – which referenced the HSAS’ ascents and descents in another form of ‘vertical geopolitics’ (Graham, 2004) – and invoking Vivekananda’s words, Kallat also highlighted that in the case of the HSAS, and despite its reliance upon telecommunications, “the collective or individual encountering of discourse is always an embodied practice” (Pred, 2007: 368).

In the same vein as Jitish Kallat, Kasim Ali, a poet and scholar, begins his reflections upon the HSAS’ interplay with race by invoking Hinduism. His book, *Orange Alert* (2010), is prefaced by two quotes: one referring to the Hindu Sacral Chakra, symbolised by orange and governing creativity, joy and enthusiasm; and the other, a DHS Code Orange alert. Originally intended as a collection of aesthetic essays, Ali

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<sup>86</sup> There are some methodological issues with the paper. First, the survey was conducted whilst the nationwide HSAS was at Code Yellow, its default. Thus, a higher number of people might have guessed correctly than would have had it been at Code Orange, a more unusual occurrence. Second, the survey period partially overlapped with the HSAS’ first geographically specific warning. As such, there were two active federal colour codes simultaneously, which may have confused respondents. The paper’s findings are supported, though, by the Council for Excellence in Government (2004), Knight (2005), and Stewart, McLean and Huckaby (2006). For more on the intersection of race and the HSAS, see Ali (2009), Chiriboga (2007), Gill (2009), Lee and Jacobson (2012).



later realised that the politics of the war on terror ran throughout his work, hence the title (Ali, 2012, interview). As opposed to Kallat's implicit critique of the HSAS' racial connotations, Ali is unequivocal, recounting an actual incident in which a young man reported him for behaving suspiciously when Ali was putting out his recycling. Thus, Ali (2010: 91) says, "Because of my recycling buildings were evacuated, classes were canceled, campus was closed", before correcting himself and continuing, "No. Not because of my dark body. Because of his fear. Because of the way he saw me." (Ali, 2010: 91). Ali counterpoints the effect on people of the HSAS' colours, which he sees as part of the culture of fear through which the young man saw him (Ali, 2012, interview), with the effect of his own body's coloration, spurring that same person to report Ali's innocent actions. Thus, Ali's experience attests that, "Race, like gender and sexuality, is a geographical project" (Mitchell, 2000: 230), in this case dependent upon particular spaces, actions and bodies. More specifically, it stresses that, "Counterterrorism is a form of racial, civilizational knowledge" (Puar and Rai, 2002: 122), in which the HSAS was implicated. Judith Butler's (2006: 39) claim that the HSAS heightened 'racial hysteria' might be an overstatement, but the System was entwined with racial presumptions and affects in multiple and problematic ways.

#### **6.4 Books, television, film and the HSAS as a popular icon**

Satire of the HSAS also appeared in other more traditional US media, including novels, television shows and films. In conjunction with the popular representations discussed above, my contention here is that these contributed to the formation of what Raento (2011: iii) has called, a "popular icon" (and see, too, Mintz, 2005). For Raento (2011), such icons include, for example, postage stamps, which can be understood within wider theoretical frameworks including banal nationalism (Billig, 1995), imagined communities (Anderson, 2006) and visual methodologies (Rose, 2007), as well as the conventions through which they operate, such as colour codes. In this way, "The emblems of a nation state [popular icons] communicate the way brands do" (Raento, 2011: iv). This reference to 'brands' and 'colour codes' is elaborated upon by Aslam (2006: 15), who suggests that, "Colour is an integral element of corporate and marketing communications... and helps companies position or differentiate from the competition." But if the HSAS became a popular icon that represented the DHS like a brand, then it also malfunctioned in several ways. Unlike copyright laws protecting the private sector, almost all works created by the US government are copyright free (US Government, 2013) (see Chapter 5). As such, the HSAS could be reproduced in all kinds of ways and here I focus upon those representations that, whilst largely retaining the HSAS' original aesthetic, made a

popular icon of the System with associations that Secretary Ridge might not always have wished.

The Seth MacFarlane television show, *American Dad* – one of the most popular animated comedy series on US television (Patten, 2013) – is a case in point, and details the escapades of the titular character, Stan Smith, who is a white male CIA operative and unwavering supporter of the Republican Party. Stan’s leading role is supported by his eclectic family, which includes a liberal daughter, Hayley; a geeky son, Steve; a stay-at-home wife, Francine; a talking goldfish, Klaus; and a camp alien, Roger. Thus, we might say that although Stan’s family adheres to some of the conventions of the heterosexual family unit upon which discourses justifying the war on terror have occasionally been predicated (Puar, 2006), in other ways, especially through the presence of Roger, it clearly does not. Moreover, although Stan himself is both a satirical and literal embodiment of the post-9/11 security state – seeing al Qaeda threats at every turn, even in his quiet suburban neighbourhood of Langley Falls, Virginia – his views are frequently lampooned in the show, including his misogynist attitude to his wife and other patriarchal and ultra-nationalist opinions. Deputy Secretary Loy (2012, interview) has said that the HSAS was “cartoon-like”, but that this was a positive attribute, making the System more accessible to audiences; a similar comment to that of Secretary Ridge, who suggested that the satire of the HSAS might help promote its message (see above). *American Dad* attests to this accessibility, but also exploits the same; demonstrating how in the modern global media sphere, “images and information have become ever more difficult to control.” (Kennedy, 2008: 279).<sup>87</sup>

In the very first episode, Stan, whilst looking at his ever-present HSAS fridge magnet, warns his wife, “Francine, you be careful out there today, we’re at terror alert orange. Which means something might go down somewhere in some way at some point in time, so look sharp!” Hayley replies, “You know, dad, it’s great that you and your CIA buddies have created a fun little system to keep the masses paralysed in fear.” (MacFarlane and Hughart, 2005). As usual, it is Hayley’s opinion that acts as a rejoinder to the excessive paranoia of her security-conscious father, in a comment that relates to accusations that the HSAS was politically manipulated, which had

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<sup>87</sup> The HSAS also features briefly in the other US animated series, *Robot Chicken* (Green et al., 2006) and *The Boondocks* (Barnes and McGruder, 2005); the graphic novel, *In the Shadow of No Towers* (2004); and the animated film, *Monsters and Aliens* (Stewart et al., 2009). The System was also referenced in British popular culture (see Anthony, 2006; Hardcastle, 2009; Samuel, 2007), as were British terrorist alert systems (see Ingram and Dodds, 2011; Hamilton and Jenkin, 2011; *Twenty Twelve*, 2011), discussed in Chapter 8. The only British media outlet to cover all HSAS alert changes appears to have been the BBC (see BBC News, 2002a; 2002b; 2003a; 2003b; 2003c; 2003d; 2003e; 2006).

emerged two years earlier (see next chapter). Later in the same series, the HSAS is again used as the starting-point for a joke, in an episode, ‘Threat levels’ (MacFarlane and Woods, 2005), that reflects upon the System’s embodied geopolitics. *American Dad*’s two recurring newsreaders, homosexual partners Greg and Terry, are seen reporting on a threat level change. “This is the first time the threat level has [ever] been blue”, Greg tells us, “the same colour as my handsome co-anchors eyes,” before being admonished by Terry, who is struggling with his embarrassment (MacFarlane and Woods, 2005) (Figure 28). Whilst Greg and Terry reflect a male-dominated media-sphere, particularly in the case of news anchors, they also undermine this heterosexual norm by being homosexual (Puar, 2006). In so doing, this joke subverts one of the dominant metanarratives of the war on terror: that this was a war for men to win, so that the white heterosexual family might remain intact (Puar, 2006).



**Figure 28: Greg and Terry (MacFarlane and Woods, 2005)**

After these two mentions in the first season, the HSAS ceased to be discussed specifically by the characters in *American Dad*, but remained on the Smiths’ refrigerator. This suggests that by this point the HSAS had become, at least in the opinion of the show’s creators, a popular icon; it no longer needed to be commented upon because it was assumed that the audience would understand the System to be a reference to the excesses of the homeland security state, of which Stan was emblematic. Focussed discussions were replaced by fleeting glances, often during conversations taking place in the kitchen (Figure 29). Through a form of banal geopolitics the HSAS was literally domesticated and for the audience, just like the

Smiths, the System could now only be appreciated through what Mirzoeff (2009: 303) has called, “vernacular watching”: an observant practice for objects seen out of the corner of one’s eye. In the context of homeland security, such objects have been described by Barkun (2011: 69) as ‘ambient motifs’; “their influence lies below the threshold of conscious awareness. They maintain a pervasive... existence, whether in forms of high cultural, intellectual, and artistic endeavour, or in popular culture and entertainment.” And the belief of the show’s creators that the HSAS would now automatically affect audiences – spurring thoughts of homeland security and perhaps the imbrication of this with a governmental ‘politics of fear’, as Hayley’s original quote attests – has been exemplified by its inclusion in the show’s latest series; series that have aired after the HSAS’ cessation.



**Figure 29: The Smiths’ HSAS fridge magnet (MacFarlane and Hughtart, 2005)**

We might expand Mirzoeff’s (2009) term, ‘vernacular watching’, too, to include other observant practices, including ‘vernacular reading’. Such references to the System were frequently satirical, but often darkly so, and used to set a tenor of cynicism. The late writer John Updike, for example, in his novel, *Terrorist* (2006), briefly discusses the HSAS by staging a conversation between a DHS employee and her partner, Jack, about a fictional Secretary of Homeland Security. Jack, who is clearly meant to elicit the sympathies of the reader, suggests that, “It [the HSAS] means they [the DHS] want us to feel they’re not just sitting on our tax dollars. They want us to feel they have a handle on this thing [terrorism]. But they don’t.” (Updike, 2006: 32). For Amore (2009a: 65), referring to this passage, “the practices of homeland

securitization are revealed in all their contingency and unpredictability”. But whilst this reference to the HSAS might reflect Updike’s wider cynicism about homeland security in *Terrorist*, he is not suggesting that the usage of the HSAS is unpredictable at all. On the contrary, he is implying that the uses of the System can be predicted exactly: by the efficacy of such changes to the government (see Chapter 7). And Updike’s usage of the HSAS was, I think, quite intentional. This particular policy, as a popular icon, could invoke the problematic intersection of politics and homeland security that Updike wanted to reflect upon at this point in the book.



**Figure 30: MARSEC in *The Ghost* (Polanski et al., 2010)**

In Robert Harris’ novel, *The Ghost* (2007) – which satirises the various aspects of the war on terror, including the ‘fortress America’ mentality – criticism of the HSAS is perhaps more implicit than Updike’s. Thus, near the denouement of the novel, when the innocent lead protagonist fears for his safety, Harris (2007: 302) writes that, “The Department [of Homeland Security] had just raised its threat assessment from yellow (elevated) to orange (high)”. Roman Polanski’s cinematic adaptation of the book uses the Coast Guard’s adaptation of the HSAS, MARSEC, in a similar vein, by building tension at another moment in which the lead fears for his life (Polanski et al., 2010) (Figure 30). Again, fleeting references to the HSAS within both mediums contribute to the creation of the System as a popular icon and draw upon this notion to create a sense of unease in the audience. And according to commentary by viewers on IMDb, this sense of unease was palpable. Thus, one reviewer suggests that, “the film suggests a constant looming menace”; another that, “As the film reaches its

conclusion... tensions and levels of paranoia [increase]”; and another still, that *The Ghost* (2010) features, “black humor, a preoccupation with... paranoia” (IMDb, 2013b). Whilst the HSAS is not commented upon specifically, it is the suggestion here that fleeting glances of the HSAS drew upon the System’s role as a popular icon to instil a particular mood of tension and unease in the audience.



**Figure 31: A terror alert in *The Manchurian Candidate* (Demme, 2004)**

Other films embraced the HSAS in similar ways to *The Ghost*, using the System to help construct the mood of certain scenes, which were uniformly critical of the homeland security state. In *The Manchurian Candidate* (2004), the HSAS is used to satirise dominant homeland security assumptions, just as the original sought to undermine Cold War security logics in 1962 (Carruthers, 1998). Focussing upon a Halliburton style conglomerate, Manchurian Global, the film plays with the idea that vested corporate interests hold as much sway in elections as voters. In particular, the latter are purposefully misled by political spin and in a short montage the rise of the titular Presidential candidate is intercut with a televised terror alert, which has just been increased (Figure 31). The message is clear: elections are driven as much by the confection and then amelioration of security threats, as they are by substantive issues. In this way, the film reflects upon notions that the HSAS was manipulated for political gain (see next chapter). In featuring the System on a news report, *The Manchurian Candidate* also comments upon the intimate relationship between the media and government (Der Derian, 2001), and the former’s importance to communication of the HSAS, in particular (Chapter 5). Again, a fleeting glance of the

HSAS demonstrates the meaningfulness of the System as a shorthand popular icon by this point, too.



**Figure 32: The opening of *Civic Duty* (Lanter and Renfroe, 2006)**

*Civic Duty* (Lanter and Renfroe, 2006), a film that also satirises the sense of fear precipitated by the 9/11 attacks, uses the same medium, a television news report, to display the HSAS to its audience (Figure 32). In the film's opening scene, a newsreader says that, "The drop, announced early this morning by the Secretary of Homeland Security was the first lowering of the alert status in nearly two months." Viewers of the report, though, are still encouraged to take the threat of terrorism seriously and, as the rest of the film unfolds, it becomes clear that this news report was the start of the lead protagonist's descent into acute paranoia with regard to the threat of terrorism. As in *The Manchurian Candidate*, the media in *Civic Duty* are seen as feeding such paranoia (James, 2007); softening viewers until they can be manipulated by either their own, or their leaders', fears. And again, reviewers on IMDb demonstrate that this sense of discomfort was detectable and identifiable, with one suggesting that the film evokes, "the paranoia we all felt after 9/11", and another that, "The real "message" of this film is the dreadful effect that television "news" has on many Americans" (IMDb, 2013a). In this sense, *Civic Duty* reflected the importance of the media in communicating the HSAS' message (Sesno, 2006), and

the possibility that the affectivity of such news reports might be exploited for political gain (discussed in the next chapter).<sup>88</sup>

To finish, these satirical takes are contrasted with perhaps the only production in which the HSAS was commented upon earnestly and positively, and which supports again the conception of the System as a popular icon: the television series, *24*. The show follows the exploits of counterterrorist operative, Jack Bauer, as he attempts to interdict terrorist threats to the US; threats that are often partially directed at his daughter, thus reinforcing the traditional Hollywood notion of heterosexual heroes protecting their families (King, 1999; Sharp, 1998). The show has been controversial, not least because it appears to legitimate torture and political assassinations (Holloway, 2008; Kellner, 2010). Thus, its “moral grammars of war”, in Weber’s (2005: 482) term, are somewhat dubious, and part of what Michael Shapiro (2009: 18) has called “violent cartographies”, in which elements of popular culture have been “suffused with images of militarization, securitization, and violence” (Dodds, 2010b: 22). Indeed, Bauer is a hero lionised as much for flouting ethical rules as traditional heroes and superheroes were for upholding them (Dodds and Kirby, forthcoming), and “has a degree of autonomy”, in Erickson’s (2007: 204) opinion, “that frequently verges on criminality.” The show’s influence across society has been detailed elsewhere (Hark, 2004; Van Veeren, 2009), but pertinent here is that the series has been particularly supportive of the homeland security state. Homeland Security Secretary Chertoff, for example, defended its coverage of torture (Ingram and Dodds, 2009), and is a well-known fan (Dodds, 2010).

The show’s sympathetic portrayal of the homeland security state is emblematised by *24*’s earnest references to the HSAS. In the seventeenth episode of season three (Surnow, 2003), the fictional President, in conjunction with his DHS Secretary, announces that, “a threat level red exists throughout the United States” (Cochran and Kronish, 2004). And the next season’s tagline, which featured on promos and trailers prior to the season’s release, declared that, “The terror alert level has just been raised.” (Surnow, 2005). As with the examples above, *24*’s references to the HSAS draw upon the currency of the System as a popular icon, except that here the sense of unease and tension that the System invokes is not satirised, but endorsed; seemingly to add excitement and drama to the wider storyline. We might note, too, how

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<sup>88</sup> The same point is made in another brief reference to the HSAS in Michael Moore’s documentary, *Fahrenheit 9/11* (Moore et al., 2004), which accompanies an image of the System with the comment, “You can make people do anything if they’re afraid.” Moore had shown antipathy toward the HSAS at the 2003 Oscars the year before this film’s release, denouncing ‘orange alerts’ and the upcoming war (in Iraq) (BBC News, 2003b), thus linking domestic security to foreign violence, in the process.



particularly appropriate the HSAS and its aesthetic was to *24*. The annotations and title of the HSAS are set in the font, Bank Gothic (Swain, 2010), as are *24*'s captions (Bank Gothic Font, 2011), which are used to inform the audience of how long Bauer has left to prevent a terrorist attack. In this way, both the HSAS and *24* are orientated in the same temporal direction, and through Bank Gothic they inform the viewer of the potential for an attack in the future. Indeed, John Fenzel (2011, interview) himself has said that he was aware of *24*'s portrayal of the HSAS, and thus we might recall Ingram and Dodds' (2009: 2) assertion that, "The show is less a reflection of US homeland security culture than a constitutive part of it."<sup>89</sup>

### **Conclusions**

Andreas Behnke (2010: 10) has suggested that satire of the System, "emphasises the vacuity and meaningless of the HSAS." In my opinion, the fact that so many satirists mocked the System in so many different ways, suggests exactly the opposite. Rather, the System had a surfeit of meanings; perhaps more than the DHS would have wished. At the same time, it is important to be circumspect with regard to the power of humour to effect political change (Cochran, 1989; Davies, 2007; Thurston, 1991). Satire became a significant method of interpreting the HSAS, but it existed alongside serious discussion of the System and official reviews (Chapter 5). Whilst, as this chapter attests, there are myriad examples of humour at the HSAS' expense, and Ridge (2009) himself cited the negative effect of this upon the System, the power of these criticisms should not be overestimated. Debbie Lisle (2007), for example, has noted how art ostensibly attempting to critique the war on terror, can sometimes serve to merely reinforce its central tenets. After Jon Stewart's opening day critique, the HSAS remained in effect for almost a decade, during which time it precipitated enormous financial costs. In 2004, Senator John Kerry, in his presidential campaign, bemoaned the fact that, "Americans, sadly, laugh at it [the HSAS]" (Wenner and Kerry, 2004), but he made no progress in actually dissolving the System. Indeed, at the same time that Kerry was making these comments, accusations emerged that the HSAS was having effects that were, for many, far from funny.

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<sup>89</sup> This section has focussed upon the most sustained considerations of the HSAS within popular culture, but other references can be found in Raban (2006), *On alert* (Young and Finberg, 2004), *V for Vendetta* (2005), and Cook (2009). The HSAS does not feature in perhaps the most famous film series concerning modern counterterrorism, *Jason Bourne*, but Dodds (2010: 26) does suggest that this trilogy can be seen as the transition of the hero from "an *elevated* risk in the first film to a *high* and finally a *severe* risk in the second and third films, respectively." All of these references attest, again, to the prevalence of the HSAS as a popular icon.

## **7. A political spectrum?**

### **Affect and the alleged manipulation of the HSAS**

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The suggestion that the HSAS was politically manipulated was frequently made by satirists. The origins of such accusations lie in the publication of an academic paper in 2004 by a PhD student at Cornell University, Robb Willer. It was the first publication to demonstrate a link between elevations in the HSAS level and support for President Bush. Immediately after this, debate on whether the System was a political device rather than public safety tool increased dramatically in the media. Later, accusations diminished, but this changed again in 2009 when former Secretary Ridge published his memoirs. In them, he stated that there had been pressure from some within the Homeland Security Council to raise the alert level in order to boost the incumbent administration in the polls. This chapter details this story; a case study in the Bush administration's putative 'politics of fear'. It does so to add to empirical knowledge of these events, but primarily to think about how the System worked affectively. Through an examination of the claims and counter-claims of senior officials, this chapter reflects upon the mechanics of the HSAS' affectivity, and demonstrates how notions of 'governments' and 'populations' as singular entities might be refined through more 'peopled' accounts of geopolitical practice (Kuus, 2007).

#### **7.1 Contextualising political affectivity in US domestic security**

In order to contextualise the HSAS' political affectivity, it is useful to examine some of the ways that terrorism, fear and politics intersected in the sphere of US domestic security prior to 2004. When the System was first introduced by the OHS it was satirically derided by some, as the previous chapter attests, but did attract a measure of bipartisan support. Representative Jane Harman (D-CA), for example, called the System "a step in the right direction" (Miller, 2002); Senator John Kerry (D-MA) offered suggestions for the System's improvement (Wyatt, 2003); and Senator John Edwards (D-NC), later Kerry's presidential running mate, stated that, "in fairness to the administration, I understand what they're doing [with the System]" (Wyatt, 2003). Democrats were certainly critical of the HSAS, too – including Governor Howard Dean (D-VT) (Wyatt, 2003) and Representative Dennis Kucinich (D-OH) (Kucinich, 2003); and Jane Harman, John Edwards and John Kerry themselves upon other occasions (Locy, 2002; Edwards, 2002; Wenner and Kerry, 2004, respectively) – but what these comments suggest is the difficulty encountered by those wishing to

criticise outright a counterterrorist policy that, on the surface, was intended to make Americans safer: it was possible, but it had its own politics.<sup>90</sup> In the run-up to the 2004 election, for example, John Kerry was asked by a journalist, “Doesn’t it seem the threat level gets raised at key moments during the campaign?”, but the presidential hopeful declined to be drawn on the question (Wenner and Kerry, 2004). Democrats such as Kerry no doubt felt additional pressure given that traditionally a majority of Americans have told pollsters of their greater confidence in the Republicans’ ability to protect the country, as opposed to the Democrats’; a perception that Daalder and Lindsay (2003) have suggested was heightened after 9/11.<sup>91</sup>

Indeed, the GOP has a history of such spin, in which both the strength of an enemy other and the inability of Democrats to respond to this have arguably been exaggerated. The Cold War, for example, provided an especially convenient backdrop for such tactics as it presented a continual, existential threat, which could then be used to garner political support through fear and an emphasis on partisan differences; in other words, it had a potential effect on certain members of the American population that could be manipulated. Civil defence practice has been implicated in this, in particular, with Kerr (1983: 17) suggesting that, “some regarded the civil defense program as basically political in nature and viewed some of the programs as designed to keep the incumbent President in the White House”; presumably in the sense that such programs suggested the presidency was acting to keep Americans safe. We might cite, too, Senator McCarthy’s (R-WI) anti-communist witch hunts during the early Cold War (Westen, 2007), and the fact that Presidents Nixon, Reagan and the elder Bush, amongst others, have all used their perceived mettle on national security to rally political support. For Carter and McCormack (2006: 241), “the right has grasped more successfully how the highly mediatised public sphere in the US does not so much function to channel codes and signs, but to channel and amplify affects”; including those precipitating fear within the context of a wider war effort (see the final section of this chapter).<sup>92</sup>

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<sup>90</sup> Howard Dean was perhaps the most vociferous of these Democrats, suggesting that, “I am concerned that every time something happens that’s not good for President Bush, he plays his trump card, which is terrorism” (Associated Press, 2004e; and see Dean, 2003).

<sup>91</sup> For some, however, “[President] Obama’s record [of drone strikes in recent years] has eroded the political perception that Democrats are weak on national security.” (Becker and Shane, 2012; and see, too, Harris, 2012).

<sup>92</sup> This is not to suggest that Democratic administrations, as well, have not attempted the emotional management of populations – Democrats as well as Republicans were in charge of the civil defence practices that Kerr (1983) discusses above, for example – but that Republicans have perhaps shown a particular proclivity toward doing so.

President Bush appeared to continue this trend in the aftermath of 9/11 when his personal approval levels peaked (Kellner, 2003b), and he demonstrated particular skill at garnering further support through divisive and affectual politics that stressed the threat of terrorism and the Republicans' especial ability to ameliorate the same (Carter and McCormack, 2006; Kellner, 2010). Richard Grusin (2010: 44), for example, suggests that the Bush administration was selling war against Iraq as early as the 2002 State of the Union address and that such 'pre-mediations', "functioned to help frighten the American public so that it would return control of Congress to the Republican Party in the 2002 mid-term elections". In Rothe and Muzzatti's (2004: 341) phrase, the President and his advisors created "a moral panic", which only the incumbent administration could alleviate. Indeed, 2002 was the same year that "Karl Rove declared to the Republican National Committee that terror (in the guise of national security) would be the linchpin of a Republican [policy] realignment over the next several years." (Westen, 2007: 349). "We can go to the country confidently on this issue", Rove said, "because Americans trust the Republican Party to do a better job of keeping our communities and families safe" (Edsall, 2002). Rove's assertions were followed-up during the 2004 Republican National Convention, just two months before the presidential election (see below), in which, as Westen (2007: 367) recalls, "Scarcely a minute passed... without mention of terror, terrorists, the war on terror, or the events of September 11."<sup>93</sup>

Such suggestions are not only to be found in critical academic and journalistic accounts of this period, either. In 2008, a bipartisan Senate panel found that the Bush administration was guilty of "overstating the Iraqi threat in the emotional aftermath of the Sept. 11 attacks" (Mazzetti and Shane, 2008). And with reference to this 'emotional aftermath' we might recall the notion of 9/11 as a 'somatic marker'; "a memory that necessitates and justifies a radical "down-scaling" of the world into infantile categories and identities" (Ó Tuathail, 2003: 859), which Ó Tuathail (2003) suggests helped facilitate Bush's call to war and other security policies post-9/11. In this sense, it certainly seems difficult to dispute Nigel Thrift's (2004: 58) contention that in modern Western society, "knowledges [of the creation and mobilisation of affect] are not only being deployed knowingly, they are also being deployed politically (mainly but not only by the rich and powerful) to political ends". As such, the political manipulation of affect and its subsequent manifestation into emotional conditions, requires further and sustained examination (see, amongst others, Bleiker and

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<sup>93</sup> The convention was also purposefully staged in New York against the backdrop of a devastated Manhattan skyline (Westen, 2007), "with Bush accepting its presidential nomination in New York City just days before the third anniversary of September 11." (Ó Tuathail, 2003: 868). Rove's possible role in manipulation of the HSAS is discussed below.

Hutchison, 2008; Bleiker and Leet, 2006; Crawford, 2000; Jackson, 2005; Pain and Smith, 2008b; Sharp, 2009), which is what the remainder of this chapter undertakes through the example of the HSAS.

## In the Loop

Al Kamen

### Will Terror Alert Level Show Its True Colors?

By Al Kamen

Wednesday, October 13, 2004; Page A19

A Cornell sociologist says he has found scientific evidence that, whenever the government issues a terrorism alert, **President Bush's** approval ratings go up, even on domestic issues, such as his handling of the economy.

**Robb Willer**, assistant director of the Sociology and Small Groups Laboratory at Cornell -- someone else runs Large Groups? -- tracked about 26 occasions since 2001, including the major Code Orange alerts by the Department of Homeland Security, when some agency -- the FBI, the State Department or someone else -- announced a potential threat to Americans.

He tracked those with 131 Gallup polls taken during that time up until May. Willer, a doctoral candidate in sociology, found that, on average, each warning prompted a 2.75 point increase in the president's approval rating the following week.

— In the Loop —

- \* [Bush Not the Only One Who Has It Hard](#) (The Washington Post, Oct 8, 2004)
- \* [Bremer's Leap Into the Greenbrier Patch](#) (The Washington Post, Oct 6, 2004)
- \* [Voice of Doubt Won't Go Away](#) (The Washington Post, Oct 4, 2004)
- \* [The Comeback Kid](#) (The Washington Post, Oct 1, 2004)

**Figure 33: Willer's paper in *The Washington Post* (Kamen, 2004)**

This is an overview of the atmosphere, then, in which Cornell PhD student, Robb Willer, published his paper, 'The effects of government-issued terror warnings on presidential approval ratings', on September 30, 2004. In the article, Willer (2004), after undertaking a time-series analysis, found that each elevation of the HSAS was causing temporary increases in the polls for President Bush of nearly three percentage points. Despite its topicality, being published only a month before the 2004 presidential election, Willer (2012, interview) did not expect – and perhaps could not have expected – the reception that the paper received. Within days, he was fielding calls from some of the US' most prominent media outlets (Willer, 2012, interview). The paper's findings received coverage on National Public Radio and the *Today Show*, *The Washington Post* and *USA Today*, *The Guardian* (in the UK) and Fox News, amongst other places (Willer, 2012, interview) (Figure 33); and one New York-based news agency discussed the possibility of flying him to the city especially for interview (Willer, 2012, interview). In total, over one hundred newspaper articles covered the research, from the *LA Times* to *The Times of India*, with the latter

possessing the largest circulation of any newspaper in the English language (Willer, 2012, interview). As Dittmer (2010: 94) says, “Amplification [in the context of affectual theory] refers to the intensification of experiences, especially through the use of popular culture and the media.” And here, a particularly marked example of this amplification was occurring.<sup>94</sup>

It is important to note, though, that the media did not always amplify suggestions that the HSAS had been altered for political gain in this fashion. References had been made to the potential manipulation of terror alerts prior to Willer’s paper, which were not given such broad coverage. In 2002, *USA Today* asked whether terror warnings might be a way to deflect criticism from the White House in the event that another attack occurred (Locy, 2002), as did the *The New York Times* (The warning overdose, 2002), but neither article appears to have been more widely commented upon. *The Village Voice*’s reporter, Geoffrey Gray (2002), made the more serious accusation that terror alerts might be used to distract attention from stories detrimental to the Bush administration – “Not wag the dog per se, but wag the terrorist?” – but again this seems to have been a standalone comment that was not picked-up elsewhere within the media.<sup>95</sup> And there are several reasons that might explain why these comments were not more widely publicised. Methodologically, none of these suggestions were backed by statistical analysis like Willer’s findings; in other words, they were opinions without hard evidence to support them. As well, they emerged during a period that, as the previous chapter attests, was not necessarily conducive to criticism of domestic security policies, even if this was possible (Brunn, 2004). In 2002, President Bush may still have been enjoying the boost in popularity that he received after the 9/11 attacks, which had seen his approval rating reach 90 percent; a gain “unprecedented in its magnitude and durability.” (Fiorina, Peterson, Voss and Johnson, 2007: 254).

Conversely, what might explain the especially pronounced reception that Willer’s paper received? Willer (2012, interview) himself has two suggestions. First, he suggests that despite Bush’s popularity in the aftermath of 9/11, the President’s actions in the war on terror were increasingly being seen as politically motivated by 2004 rather than in the exclusive interests of national security (Blumenthal, 2004); an assumption that conforms to Karl Rove’s stated ambitions for Bush’s campaign,

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<sup>94</sup> Willer’s findings have been challenged by Davis and Silver (2004), but the papers that support his argument are far greater in number (Bonilla and Grimmer, 2012; Browne and Silke, 2011; Hodler, Loertscher; Nacos, 2007; Nacos, Bloch-Elkon and Shapiro, 2011; Rohner, 2007; Willer and Adams, 2008).

<sup>95</sup> This quotation is a reference to the film, *Wag the Dog* (Levinson and De Niro, 1997), in which a fake conflict is created by an American presidential administration to distract the electorate from a controversy involving the President.

above. Thus, asked about his research's lineage, Willer (2012, interview) recalls that, "it was spring of 2004, and post-9/11, the Iraq war in full swing-type of environment and the re-election campaign was happening and, during that period of time, [there] had been, for about two and a half years, regular terror alerts". In other words, it seemed to Willer, and clearly to others given the reception of his work in the media, that this was the kind of tactic that the Bush administration might have employed. Second, "a lot of people on the Left, not so much in the mass media, but in private conversations and in online fora, had speculated that the System was being used to manipulate support for President Bush and his administration." (Willer, 2012, interview). In other words, we might say that the media speculation discussed above, whilst not directly triggering widespread discussion of the HSAS' potential political manipulation, contributed to an undercurrent of suspicion about the System that already existed; "sentiment bubbling beneath the surface" (Willer, 2012, interview).

In addition, the resonance of Willer's paper may have been enhanced by the fact that the month prior to its publication, the HSAS had been raised from Code Yellow to Orange for the financial services sectors of New York City, Northern New Jersey and Washington, DC: the System's sixth alert and the first geographically specific warning (Chapter 5). It was still at Code Orange when Willer's paper was published and would not be lowered until November 10, 2004, six days after the presidential election. That the alert had been raised for the final, crucial stages of the election season might have seemed to many a suspicious coincidence, especially in the aftermath of Willer's findings. Indeed, on August 4, 2004, the day that this alert was issued, NBC published another story in which the possibility of manipulation for political gain was suggested and which led to rebuttals of the same from Press Secretary, Scott McClellan, and Treasury Secretary, John Snow (U.S. says threat, 2004). Again, these do not appear to have had the impact of Willer's findings, but they arguably added to what Willer called, "sentiment bubbling beneath the surface". And this period would become even more controversial in the aftermath of the publication of Ridge's memoirs in 2009, when the ex-Secretary cast further light upon the internal politics of the HSAS threat level decision-making process with reference to this alert, in particular (see below).

However, despite the widespread attention of the media to Willer's paper, it is also important to offer a caveat to the importance of this episode. As the previous chapter has suggested in the case of satire, there is not necessarily a simple chain of causality between media representations and an actual effect upon the object of which they speak; in terms of either its future development or people's opinion of the same, in the case of the HSAS. In the aftermath of Willer's paper, no definitive evidence was

published that linked the determination of the HSAS to polling rather than public safety calculation and, as we know, Bush defeated Kerry in the presidential election of November, 2004. In 2005, an investigative reporter did dedicate an entire episode of his show, *Countdown with Keith Olbermann*, to accusations that the HSAS had been manipulated (MSNBC, 2005) – in which he suggested that, “in the last three years, there have been about 13 similar coincidences, a political downturn for the [Bush] administration, followed by a terror event, a change in the [HSAS] alert status, an arrest, a warning” (MSNBC, 2005; and see, too, Three years, 2004) – but Olbermann conceded that his reading might have been undermined by the logical fallacy, *post hoc ergo propter hoc* (i.e. that an event following another is not necessarily caused by the first), and the System continued to remain in effect and issue further alerts. Olbermann’s accusations were echoed occasionally by the media in the years ahead (Epkins, 2008; Marshall, 2006), but none proved definitively that the Bush administration had purposefully altered the HSAS level for specific political gain.



**Figure 34: *Countdown with Keith Olbermann* (Olbermann, 2004)**

In addition to noting the importance of Willer’s article to the story of the HSAS and its public discourse, we might also take this opportunity to reflect upon its implications with respect to Massumi’s (2005a: 32) suggestion that through the HSAS, “The whole population became a networked jumpiness, a distributed neuronal network registering en masse quantum shifts in the nation’s global state of discomfiture in rhythm with leaps between color levels.” Massumi’s argument is critiqued in depth below, but in some ways, Willer’s article appears to conform to



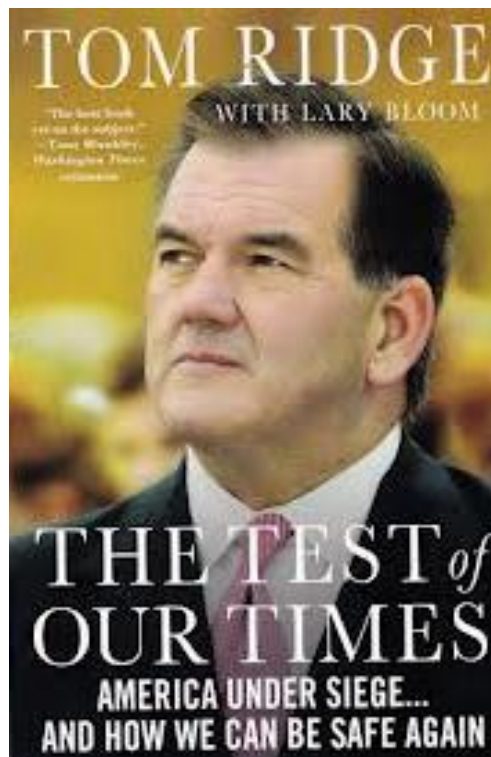
Massumi's argument (introduced in Chapter 2). Certainly, Willer's quantitative study broadly supports Massumi's qualitative assertion that the HSAS was, at least in part, a political tool, which attempted to affect members of the American population in certain ways. Indeed, whilst Massumi and Willer direct their attention toward the US' civilian population, we might also broaden their conception in some ways, and suggest that affective questions were also entwined with the decisions of those 'in control' of the System. The HSAS' affectivity, once distributed, was subject to all kinds of differential experience; from the elite level, through to more prosaic and everyday encounters. The remaining sections of this chapter attempt to capture this differential experience, focussing initially upon the homeland security elites that responded to Willer's claims (and considering the veracity of Willer's claims at the same time), before moving on to theorise how the HSAS might have had the effects on civilian presidential support that both Willer and Massumi seem to believe existed.

## **7.2 Tom Ridge's memoirs, the 2004 election and the reaction of senior officials**

In 2009, accusations that the HSAS was a way to increase Bush's approval ratings peaked again, but this time with evidence that Willer's paper and others had been lacking. Presumably waiting until after President Bush left office to avoid accusations of disloyalty to his own party, Secretary Ridge (2009) released his memoirs, *The test of our times*, on September 1, 2009, in which he suggested that he had been pressured to increase the HSAS level without the intelligence to justify such a move at a meeting of the Homeland Security Council on October 30, 2004; just days before the presidential election. The fallout from this book included heated debate over what, exactly, the Secretary did and did not say, principally from those who disagreed with his comments, attesting again to the agency of particular texts in the HSAS story (see Chapter 3). Of this episode, for example, James Carafano (2011, interview) of the Heritage Foundation, who testified on the HSAS before Congress (*Hearing [Subcommittee]*, 2004), says that, "the statements in Ridge's book, I think, were taken a bit out of context", but for others they confirmed suspicions that the Bush administration had been exploiting the threat of terrorism for political gain (Conan, 2009).

The discussion to follow thus highlights that the discursive HSAS during this episode, as well as the actual System, was affective in particular ways, and that comments by Ridge about the HSAS in 2009 were amplified by the media and circulated amongst those that sat on the HSC; affecting some so much that they felt compelled to respond

to his accusations. They also demonstrate how different members of the HSC viewed the HSAS' effects on members of the American population in different ways, with Ridge apparently believing that it was affecting the predilection of certain people to vote for President Bush, but others believing that the System was empowering; offering citizens information about the nature of the terrorist threat. In other words, consideration of these debates is not simply about determining whether the HSAS' was politically affective or not – in the sense of whether it had definite effects on support for President Bush, even though this is important and considered later – but acknowledging that members of the Bush administration believed it was affective in different ways and to varying degrees. Throughout these debates we can also see how the threat of terrorism itself appeared to affect various members of Bush's political elite in different ways, which, in turn, apparently led to differing opinions on where to set the HSAS level.



**Figure 35: The cover page of Tom Ridge's memoirs (Macmillan, 2009)**

At the outset, we should note that in the first half of his memoirs, Secretary Ridge seemed to deny that any manipulation of the HSAS had occurred. The Secretary (2009: 114) stated that, "In spite of allegations of playing politics [presumably referring to the stories surrounding Willer's paper]... the White House couldn't, as a matter of course, call us up and say, "Go to orange, Tom."" And as Ridge (2009: 114)

continued, “Let me make it very clear. I was never directed [by the White House] to do so [change the HSAS level] no matter how many analysts, pundits, or critics say so.” But the very page before these statements Ridge had referenced Willer’s findings specifically, and without nearly so much equivocation. The connection between the HSAS and support for President Bush, Ridge (2009: 113) said, “was quantified by a Cornell University study that tracked 131 Gallup polls between 2001 and 2004 and found that the president’s approval rating increased by nearly three percentage points each time the government issued a terror alert.”

By the second half of his book, Ridge was explicit about the allegations, making statements that it would be difficult to construe as meaning anything other than that the Secretary felt he had been pressured to raise the HSAS level by certain members of the Bush administration; presumably, given his earlier reference to Willer’s paper, because of the beneficial effect of such elevations for Bush and the incumbent Republican administration. Recalling a meeting of the Homeland Security Council – which helped determine the threat level and required a consensus decision before doing so (Hall, 2005) – just weeks after Willer’s paper was published and days before the presidential election, Ridge stated that, “A vigorous, some might say dramatic, discussion ensued. [Attorney General] Ashcroft strongly urged an increase in the threat level, and was supported by [Defense Secretary] Rumsfeld. There was absolutely no support for that position within our department. None. I wondered, “*Is this about security or politics?*”” (Ridge, 2009: 236-237, original emphasis). Ultimately a nationwide threat warning was not issued and the HSAS remained at its geographically specific Code Orange for the regions mentioned above. For Ridge (2009: 239), “I believe our strong interventions had pulled the “go up” advocates back from the brink. But I consider that episode to be not only a dramatic moment in Washington’s recent history, but another illustration of the intersection of politics, fear, credibility, and security.” (Ridge, 2009: 239).<sup>96</sup>

Overall, the tenor of Ridge’s comments seems clear. Whilst he denied that either the White House or President Bush had pressured the DHS to change the HSAS level, he claims that other members of the Homeland Security Council did, including John Ashcroft and Donald Rumsfeld. In the aftermath of the claims Ashcroft remained silent, but Rumsfeld was quick to denounce them as “nonsense” and issued a press

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<sup>96</sup> Ridge backtracked on some of these remarks later. In 2009, he suggested that there had been no pressure to raise the HSAS level (Conan, 2009; Hall, 2009), and in 2010 that, “leaving the White House had... nothing to do with political pressure to raise the threat level” (Klein and Ridge, 2010). It should probably be assumed, though, that these comments were made because of the fallout from the publication of his book (see below), as they clearly contradict the comments that he made in the latter; a publication in which he presumably had the time and space to represent his beliefs accurately.

release to support this assertion with further facts (Atlantic, 2009). “During the fall of 2004,” Rumsfeld said, “Usama bin Laden and an American member of al-Qaida [Adam Gadahn] released videotapes that said in no uncertain terms that al-Qaida intended to launch more attacks against Americans... Given those facts, it would seem reasonable for senior administration officials to discuss the [HSAS] threat level.” (Atlantic, 2009). In other words, Rumsfeld claims to have been affected by the videotape in a different way from Ridge, which, in his mind, justified his greater certainty that the HSAS level needed to be changed. Presumably, too, he had a different belief in what the HSAS’ effects, once raised, would be; his intention being that it gird the population for a possible attack, rather than deliberately manipulate certain citizens for specific political gain.

The quality of the bin Laden videotape as a justification for Rumsfeld’s belief that the HSAS level should be raised, though, is questionable; principally because it was implicated in the Bush administration’s putative politics of fear itself. Released just days before the 2004 presidential election on November 2, 2004, no lesser authority than President Bush himself noted that, “I thought it [the videotape] would help remind people that if bin Laden doesn’t want Bush to be president, something must be right with Bush.” (Sammon, 2006; and see, too, Watson, 2006). In the aftermath of the 2004 election, John Kerry also mentioned the video, stating that, “we were rising in the polls up until the last day when the tape appeared. We flat-lined the day the tape appeared and went down on Monday.” (Nagourney, 2005). The CIA supported Kerry’s assertion, suggesting that bin Laden’s intervention was clearly intended to boost the likelihood that Bush would be re-elected (Suskind, 2006); presumably for the reasons that Bush espoused above. And polling concurs, too, indicating that the videotape gave President Bush a four percent increase in his approval ratings (Sherwell, 2004); with 23% of respondents more likely to vote for Bush because of its contents than they would have done otherwise, compared to just 13% for Senator Kerry (Nacos, 2007).

Later, veteran reporter, Walter Cronkite, went so far as to call the release of the videotape a set-up, engineered by Bush’ senior political advisor, Karl Rove (Baker, 2010), demonstrating again the role of the media in amplifying this particular episode. Whilst this is all but impossible given that al Jazeera broadcast the video just hours after it was delivered to their offices in Islamabad by an al Qaeda runner (NBC News, 2004), the broader suggestion that Rove may have understood the political affectivity of the HSAS, across all its dimensions, is perhaps more noteworthy. In discussion with the author, a former official at the White House and colleague of Rove’s suggested that, “having known some of the personalities in the White House, it

wouldn't surprise me [if Rove had been behind manipulation of the HSAS for President Bush's electoral gain]" (and see Chapter 3). Others with direct knowledge of the Republican political apparatus in Washington made the same suggestion to the author; noting that if the accusations were true, Rove would likely have been the person responsible (Kondracke, 2012, interview).<sup>97</sup>

But do such accusations suit Karl Rove's *modus operandi*? James Moore and Wayne Slater (2006: ix), Rove's unofficial and critical biographers, note that, "His greatest talent... may be his ability to understand and manipulate the electoral process by crunching statistics, pushing money into the system, and finding issues and messages to tear people apart and negatively motivate them to go vote." In other words: to affect voters in particular ways. Elsewhere, it has been observed that Rove was instrumental in structuring President Bush's philosophical approach to politics and the threat of terrorism (Moore and Slater, 2003; Suskind, 2004a), which implies that a policy as pertinent to this philosophical approach as the HSAS would not have passed him by. Might Rove, then, or a member of his team, have been 'crunching' the same statistics as a Cornell PhD student with far fewer resources? It is possible, but like accusations of manipulation more widely, certainty can never be achieved. Rove was not a member of the HSC (Reese, 2003), and given that President Bush never unilaterally changed the threat level (Ridge, 2009), input at such meetings would have been the main way that he could have directly affected the HSAS. What these accounts do suggest, though, is that Rove and political operatives of his ilk, especially in the age of mass polling, have an interest in the affectivity of the policies that their political superiors choose to implement.

In addition to Rumsfeld, other members of the HSC also denied the accusations. James Loy (2012, interview), the DHS Deputy Secretary during this period, when asked whether politics had ever entered debates on whether to change the alert level, replied that such manipulation, "just did not occur", whether in meetings in the White House Situation Room, the Oval Office, or elsewhere. "I sat in those meetings [of the HSC]", Loy (2012, interview) said, "[and there was] never a tendered thought from some analyst [about the electoral potential of the System]". The people that determined the threat level were experts in their field, he continued, "the right players", and "never [were those meetings] about political opportunism." (Loy, 2012, interview). Of course, that a thought was not tendered does not mean that it did not exist in the minds of certain HSC members, nor that action was not taken because of

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<sup>97</sup> For the record, Rove's memoirs (2010) do not mention the HSAS at all, although this would almost certainly be construed by those above, and those sharing their opinion, as a purposeful attempt by Rove to avoid commenting upon a policy that he thought might have had negative associations with himself.

such thoughts. Rather, it suggests that no one on the HSC explicitly voiced the belief that the HSAS could have political effects on Bush's approval rating, which is a slightly different proposition. To a degree, though, even this has been challenged by another official who sat on the HSC, Fran Townsend; demonstrating again how the threat of terrorism affected different members of the HSC in different ways, which was then visibly and publicly calibrated through their opinions on where to set the HSAS level.

On the surface, Admiral Loy's sentiments were corroborated by Townsend, President Bush's third Homeland Security Advisor, who chaired the meeting of October 30, 2004; the meeting at which Ridge (2009) says he was pressured to raise the alert without the intelligence to justify such a move. Townsend passionately denounced Ridge's accusations, suggesting that, "you have to wonder if this is not just publicity meant to sell more books," and that she, like Tom Ridge, did not wish to raise the alert at this particular meeting; along with FBI Director Robert Mueller and Secretary of State Colin Powell, neither of whom have ever commented publicly on the allegations (CNN, 2009; Sharma, 2009). A close reading of Townsend's comments, though, suggests that political ramifications were considered. Intending to defend herself and other members of the HSC, Townsend said that, "The only [political] discussions I recall were on the margin – there was a concern that if the intelligence supported raising the threat level, it might actually [be] to the detriment of President Bush because people might perceive it as being political" (Sharma, 2009). Thus, Townsend was concerned that an increase in the HSAS level would work affectively, but that this would encourage suspicion and distrust within members of the population, rather than fear that could then, potentially, be exploited for direct electoral gain.

The notion that the HSAS was politically manipulated for electoral advantage, then, presents a quandary. On one hand there are Ridge's accusations, which are supported by the findings of Robb Willer, much of the popular media, and to a certain reading, Fran Townsend; on the other, there are the statements of Donald Rumsfeld and Admiral Loy, who both sat on the HSC, and to another reading, Fran Townsend again. There is the coincidence that many of the HSAS' increases occurred when the Republicans might have wanted to detract attention from the Democrats, as Keith Olbermann (MSNBC, 2005) describes, but also the coincidence that Ridge chose to air his accusations whilst he and his publisher were publicising his memoirs. Rumsfeld's justification for proposing to increase the alert in the autumn of 2004 may seem tenuous, but only the Defense Secretary actually knows whether he feared an attack was imminent and whether it was because of the bin Laden videotape. Tom

Ridge (2009: 236) himself believed that, “A threatening message, audio or visual, should not be the sole reason to elevate the threat level”, but perhaps Rumsfeld had a lower threshold, or was affected by this particular videotape to a greater extent.

We might also note from this discussion how different officials viewed the HSAS’ affectivity in different ways, to nuance the suggestion that it simply and solely changed certain citizens’ predilection to vote for Bush or not. This was not the only effect that the System had and thus not the only way that the HSAS was affective. Fran Townsend, for example, appeared concerned that an elevation of the threat level might have sown distrust amongst certain members of the American population. Whilst this can still be traced back to Willer’s initial suggestion that the HSAS was being altered to provide Bush with an increase in the polls, it also suggests that the HSAS was not necessarily politically affective in any single way. Rather, these debates attest to the fact that there was debate over how the HSAS might have affected different people. In addition, the debates themselves attest to the affectivity of the HSAS as a discursive object, with Ridge, Rumsfeld, Townsend and others all using different interpretations of the HSAS to support their own claims regarding this episode. As the beginning of this chapter attested, the HSAS’ affectivity, once distributed, was subject to all kinds of differential experience; not just at the level of the civilian population, but also amongst the political elites in charge of its determination.

### **7.3 Other political effects and the fractures of homeland security governance**

To populate the account of this aspect of the HSAS further, we might also reflect upon the reasons that these officials might have had for construing the HSAS’ affectivity in different ways. Such reasons stress how the threat of terrorism affected those at the highest levels of the homeland security political apparatus differently, and might have led to the differences of opinion over where to set the HSAS level seen here. Randy Beardsworth (2012, interview), a former Under Secretary and Assistant Secretary at the DHS during the meeting of October 30, 2004, suggests that, “neither Rumsfeld or Ashcroft or Cheney, any of the people outside the Department of Homeland Security, had as nuanced and as clear an understanding of the impact of changing the alert as Tom Ridge did.” Having been the governor of a large state – Pennsylvania – Ridge knew the many costs that would be precipitated at the state and local level were the federal government to impose a blanket, nationwide alert (Beardsworth, 2012, interview); costs of the sort discussed in Chapter 5. Stephen Flynn (2012, interview), a former advisor to the Bush administration on homeland security, has made the

same point, suggesting that Ridge would not have wanted to raise the HSAS level unless he felt that he really had to, because he knew the financial problems that this would cause at the state level. As Tom Ridge (2009: 238) himself states, “All of us at DHS knew better than our fellow participants [at the HSC meeting of October 30, 2004] of the delicacy of raising the threat level.” In other words, there may have been a difference of opinion simply because other officials were not as cognisant of the System’s particular effects on certain people and places within the country as others.

Similarly, Duncan Campbell (2012, interview), Secretary Ridge’s Chief of Staff during this period, contends that although politics may have been a part of the decision-making process for actors such as John Ashcroft, amongst others, it may have been politics with a small ‘p’. Ashcroft may have believed, and may have been correct in doing so, that the Department of Justice needed to go to Code Orange in order to better prepare itself for a potential attack, for example (Campbell, 2012, interview). Similarly, if an HSAS alert was issued and a terrorist attack occurred, officials could at least say that they had given warning (Flynn, 2012, interview; Sheehan, 2008); “to prove to themselves and to the public that the politicians and government officials were not asleep at the wheel” (Paul, 2011, pers. comm.).<sup>98</sup> In other words, there might have been self-interested, even political reasons for wanting to change the HSAS, but this did not necessarily make them purposefully manipulative, or directly concerned with electoral gain. A Republican political consultant, Richard Mower (2012, interview), has suggested, too, that Rumsfeld was perhaps the type of person to be more concerned about the terrorist threat than other officials and thus more likely to raise the HSAS level as a result. Again, we might stress that, contrary to accounts that have emphasised women’s fears over those of men, particularly white men (Pain and Smith, 2008b), the latter also need to be understood as feeling fearful of certain events, which, in turn, might precipitate certain emotions such as the desire to raise the HSAS level.

The creators of the HSAS, John Fenzel and Mike Byrne, seem to have mixed opinions on the controversy. In an unverified blog posting attributed to Byrne, in which he is asked for his opinion upon the accusations, the man responsible for adding the System’s colours replies that politics in Washington would not surprise him (Wimberly, 2009). In interview, though, Byrne (2012, interview) was unequivocal: from what he knows personally, the accusations were without foundation. In 2008, Fenzel (2008c) suggested on his blog that, “There is always a possibility that the

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<sup>98</sup> John Paul (with Sangyoub Park, 2009) is the co-author of the academic paper on the HSAS, ‘With the best of intentions: the color coded Homeland Security Advisory System and the law of unintended consequences’.



HSAS could be exploited for political purposes either consciously or subconsciously; especially during an election season.” And by 2011, perhaps in the aftermath of the revelations in Ridge’s memoirs, Fenzel (2011, interview) appears to have believed more firmly in the merits of these accusations. “I’m sure you can find some of the transcripts”, Fenzel (2011, interview) said, “where he [Ridge] claims that it was used for political ends [presumably referring to pre-release interviews for Ridge’s book], [that] by raising a threat level and doing it in a very public way, there may be a correlation to a bump in political polling. That certainly happened and I think that it did a vast disservice to the system, but also to the nation as well”. In addition, Fenzel (2011, interview) appears to support Ridge’s (2009) claim that the latter was purposefully pressured to raise the HSAS: “I know that Governor Ridge fought against the tendency to raise a threat level without having information that was credible, that was specific, that was corroborated, and without an imminent threat.”

Indeed, the White House had shown itself willing to use Ridge and the HSAS to its political advantage before, which would support the theory that they did so again during Bush’s 2004 re-election campaign. Shortly before the controversial HSC meeting of October 30, 2004, Ridge had increased the threat level for specific areas of the North Eastern US, as we have seen. In the press conference that followed, Ridge (2004k) stated that, “The reports that have led to this alert are the result of offensive intelligence and military operations overseas.” In other words, Ridge was saying that homeland security had been ensured by the President’s military operations abroad; operations that, by that time, were becoming increasingly controversial. But the words were not Ridge’s. Shortly before broadcasting, Ridge had been called by the White House and asked to add the line to help garner public support for the war effort (Ridge, 2009). Moreover, in the aftermath of the 2004 election it was reported “that Ridge had met with... Republican pollsters Frank Luntz and Bill McInturff just four days before embarking on the first of his sixteen trips to ten swing states at the height of the campaign season” (Franken, 2005: 29); a fact only discovered because of a Freedom of Information request by the Associated Press, which Ridge’s staff complied with three days after he left office (Franken, 2005). In this way, then, the HSAS (and Ridge) had already been used by the White House because of the positive effect that they could potentially have on the electorate and popular opinion of President Bush; the HSAS’ political affectivity had already been considered, albeit without a definite knowledge of the correlation between the System and Bush’s re-election chances.

President Bush (2003) himself had made a similar connection between the HSAS and foreign policy a year before the White House altered Ridge’s speech, during a weekly

radio address that was his only reference to the System after HSPD-3 (2002). After mentioning the System, Bush (2003) said that, “These recent threats are a stark reminder that our country remains engaged in a war on terror.” Such politicking may have been especially important, of course, in that Bush’s doctrine of national security was predicated upon pre-emptive attack whenever a threat existed that was deemed likely to occur, or even a possibility (Daalder and Lindsay, 2003; Suskind, 2006). Arguably, then, the HSAS and the threat of terrorism more generally were partly methods to legitimate Bush’s particular approach to the prosecution of the war on terror and to emphasise that the threat of terrorism was real, ongoing and thus justified military intervention abroad prior to its emergence. In this way, Bush was perhaps attempting to use the System to foster a sense of belonging and ‘imagined political community’ amongst members of the American population (Anderson, 2006; Bondi, Davidson and Smith, 2005), through implicit reference to a constituent enemy other (Cresswell, 2004; Campbell, 1998; Cowen and Gilbert, 2008). As with the World War Two metanarratives discussed in Chapter 2, such a connection implied that the nation was at war (Webster, 2011), and that the incumbent administration prosecuting that conflict should be supported as such. It was an affective tactic involving the HSAS, but again, without necessarily a firm knowledge of the correlation identified by Robb Willer. Thus, the HSAS here was construed as affective, but affective in a different way from those particular accusations.

There are also those political calculations that do not directly relate to presidential electoral support, but that are still notable. Both the White House and the DHS, for example, acknowledged that the HSAS was used to alter the public’s perceptions, as well as reveal the HSC’s consensus opinion on the terrorist threat, as the security logics discussed in Chapter 5 attest. Commenting on the creation of the HSAS, Bush says that, “We came to the conclusion at this point in time that a national alert was important to let the enemy know that we were on to them... trying to get in their mind as much as anything else.” (Woodward, 2003: 235). And as we have seen, in 2003 Ridge referred to reports that Iman Faris had been deterred from executing planned attacks because the HSAS level had been increased; with the latter knowing that this would be associated with additional security measures (Ridge, 2003i). Ashcroft concurred, stating that, “we believe that the announcement of this [HSAS change] can help in the prevention of terrorism” (Ridge, Ashcroft and Mueller, 2003). Such assertions conform to Haulley’s (2006: 54) description of the System as an indication “that the department is doing its job”; discouraging terrorist attacks partially by encouraging vigilance and resilience within the population and construing the System as something to be seen (Enders and Sandler, 2012; Peña, 2006; Ridge, 2004a;

Shenon and Wilgoren, 2003); fostering “an increased sense of security”, in the process (Chertoff, 2005b).

Indeed, this aspect of the System, its potential to encourage resilience in affected members of the population, was indicated in many ways by the original debates over whether the HSAS’ Code Yellow, ‘elevated’, should be referred to as ‘new normal’ (Fenzel, 2011, interview) (see Chapter 4); a term that would have arguably encouraged members of the American population to think of the threat of terrorism not as a temporary phenomenon, but as a threat that would exist long into the future. For Mark Neocleous (2013: 3), for example, “‘Resilience’ has in the last decade become one of the key political categories of our time” – within American homeland security, in particular (Sims, 2011) – and because of this, “The management of trauma and anxiety has become a way of mediating the demands of an endless security war: a war *of* security, war *for* security, and war *through* security” (Neocleous, 2012: 1, emphasis in original). Moreover, according to Neocleous (2012: 1), such management has particular political effects. As he continues, “The language of trauma and anxiety, and the training in resilience that is associated with these terms, weds us to a deeply conservative mode of thinking”; it might, for example, encourage the implementation of more draconian security policies than would otherwise have been favoured. In this sense, the very presence of the HSAS and its alerts had political effects, even if we might again question who Neocleous means by “us” and his implicit suggestion that populations reacted as one to such security policies (see below).

There are also other examples that could be mentioned. In the days before the invasion of Iraq, Shenon and Lichtblau (2003) quoted White House officials as saying that, “the threat level needed to be reduced to ‘elevated’ [in February, 2003] in order to return to ‘high’ in the days before [the Iraq] war.” And indeed, the level was lowered on February 27, 2003, and then increased again three weeks later, just prior to the start of hostilities. The threat of terrorism had not receded in this period, but officials felt the need to create political manoeuvring room for an increase in the future. But why not go to Code Red instead and save the trouble of shifting up and down? Shenon and Lichtblau (2003) quote another White House source as saying that, “We don’t want to be in a situation where we have to go to red alert, which involves shutting down public facilities and could create a real panic”. The level was lowered, then, not just so that it could be raised again to pre-empt retaliatory attacks for future American bombings, but to avoid the inconvenience of additional security measures. And Bennett (2006) has made the logical opposite point, suggesting that at levels beneath Code Yellow, lesser security measures “might be taken as a sign that

the Department of Homeland Security budget could be trimmed.” The security logics of HSAS threat level alterations are discussed in more depth in Chapter 5, but here I draw attention to those that suggest political decision-making might have been behind threat level changes, to suggest how questions of affectivity other than presidential electoral gain might have been considered at meetings of the HSC.

We might return here, then, to Martin and Simon’s (2008) governmentality-based theorisation of the DHS as a unified actor that can be understood solely through official departmental and federal reports (see Chapter 2); as well as other notions of the Bush administration as, for example, “a cabal of restless nationalists” (Ó Tuathail, 2003: 857), or homogenous group of “warriors” (Taylor, 2004: 491) (see Chapter 3). As this thesis has demonstrated, official reports are certainly important in understanding the DHS; and US security governance during the war on terror, including through policies like the HSAS, has also been entwined with notions of nationalism and militarism. At the same time, though, these elegant theoretical models do not capture the internal inconsistency of government practice, as the examples here demonstrate. Motivations to alter the HSAS level varied between officials and discussions between members of the HSC appear to have been marked by unpredictability, second-guessing and sometimes outright disagreement. Brian Massumi’s (2005) suggestion that the HSAS was smoothly applied by President Bush and his administration for the singular purpose of political manipulation – discussed in further depth below, in the context of the System’s affect on the civilian population – is simply not borne out by the actors that had a say in such matters; actors whose exploits serve to break down the metageography of a homogenous ‘government’ in this instance.

The HSAS was affective, but affective in many different ways, and many of the elite debates here revolve around different conceptions of this affectivity. As we have seen, the DHS (2006) admitted that the HSAS was affective in certain ways and that they took advantage of this quality; as alert changes were believed to undermine terrorists’ confidence in their own plans (Ridge, 2003i). Thus, the HSAS was frequently and publicly altered for reasons other than those specified by law in HSPD-3. These include it being lowered on February 27, 2003, simply so that it could be raised again to coincide with the start of hostilities in Iraq (Shenon and Lichtblau, 2003). For actors such as Donald Rumsfeld and John Ashcroft, it appears that the HSAS was also positively affective in that it encouraged vigilance in the population, and prepared the population for the possibility of attack. For Fran Townsend, there was a concern that an alteration of the HSAS level would sow distrust and confusion amongst certain members of the American population. In some ways, then, the

specific accusations that alterations of the HSAS had direct effects on support for President Bush (triggered by Willer's paper) occlude the fact that it was affective in lots of different ways, and that many of the debates discussed here were debates over these differences.

At the same time, given the importance of Willer's paper and Ridge's later admission to the story of the HSAS, it seems important to offer an analysis of these particular accusations, too. Clearly, without more, perhaps even all of the HSC coming forward to unequivocally state the role that politics played in their classified discussions concerning the HSAS – an event that would seem extremely unlikely (Peña, 2012, interview) – it is not possible to conclude categorically whether the HSAS was manipulated for political/ electoral gain or not. As Masco (2010: 433) says, “The power of the secret in contemporary American society is difficult to overestimate”, and this power is evoked clearly by this aspect of the HSAS story; a power that gives all members of the HSC plausible deniability. It is the author's opinion, though, that a political calculus was involved for some in determining the HSAS level, but that this was not necessarily based on purposeful statistical analysis of the HSAS and polling data in the manner of Willer's (2004) paper. Despite this, we might note that the Bush administration, through political operatives such as Karl Rove, had long demonstrated that it was willing to use the threat of terrorism to political advantage (Edsall, 2002; Weisberg, 2008), and homeland security had previously been used for this purpose as Ridge's inclusion of the White House's preferred line in his press statement accompanying the HSAS' sixth threat alert attests (discussed above). In the same vein, we might note the coincidence that HSAS alerts were sometimes issued at times when it was beneficial to the Bush administration to deflect attention away from other policy mistakes, or toward the threat of terrorism, or both (Gregory and Pred, 2007; MSNBC, 2005).

#### **7.4 The diversity of populations and the affectivity of the HSAS**

Irrespective of the conclusion one draws regarding the HSAS' putative political manipulation, what is certain is that a correlation existed between changes in the HSAS level and electoral support for President Bush. This is not the only way that the HSAS was affective, but it is, perhaps, one of the more famous ways that the System affected US citizens. A question that can be considered, then, is why the HSAS might have had this effect on certain members of the American population. In this way, following the discussion of Massumi (2005) earlier, focus is now shifted elite populations to more everyday actors. As mentioned, Willer's (2004) findings have been supported by many other academic writers and the notion that the HSAS

ultimately triggered emotional responses in many of its viewers has been cited anecdotally by numerous others, including both academics and think tank analysts (Carafano, 2006; Council on Foreign Relations, 2003; Fischhoff, 2006; Kimmel, 2006; Kramer et al., 2003; Tierney, 2008; Unger, 2007; Zimbardo and Kluger, 2003). Just as the previous section attempted to refine conceptions of singular ‘governments’ practicing homeland security, this section attempts to show how the ‘populations’ affected by the HSAS were also diverse and that conceptions of them that ignore this multifariousness are limited. It uses the work of Brian Massumi (2005) – the most cited paper on the HSAS – as a foil for understanding the HSAS’ affectivity, and also seeks to reflect further on the nature of ‘emotion’ and ‘affect’.

To begin, we might consider two oppositional theories of ‘fear’ posited in recent years; the emotion most frequently cited in relation to popular reactions to the HSAS (see, amongst others, Carafano, 2006; Fischhoff, 2006; Kimmel, 2006; Kramer, Brown, Spielman et al., 2003; Zimbardo and Kluger, 2003). At a broad scale and musing on the question of how fear acquires ‘political valence’, Zygmunt Bauman (2006: 2) has suggested that, “Fear is at its most fearsome when it is diffuse, scattered, unclear, unattached”. However, for the human geographer, Clive Barnett (2008: 198), exactly the opposite is true: “fear, terror, anxiety... have no *a priori* political valence at all. This depends on what it is they are mobilised around or attached to”. With regard to the HSAS, these assertions are both partially correct and partially incorrect. The timing of HSAS alerts was clearly unpredictable in the sense that they could be issued at any time and for reasons subjective and opaque, but the System also calibrated the threat through a clear visual scheme and directed citizens and officials to take certain actions in certain spaces. In this way, then, the System extricated fear from the politically unhelpful position of being everywhere and nowhere (Bauman), and gave it enough concrete form for the acquisition of ‘political valence’ (Barnett). Thus, the HSAS’ affectivity reflected the System’s shift from an ‘everywhere war’ conception of the terrorist threat, to one with more specific geographies.

In particular reference to terror alerts, Ben Anderson (2010b) appears to embrace Bauman’s (2006) hypothesis, but without showing how the affectual and emotional power of such warnings was actually mobilised. For Anderson (2010b: 223), “An alert... is designed to become part of the unformed, indeterminate movement of affects of fear and anxiety.” And, as he continues with reference to the HSAS in particular, “[its alerts were] a unique technique in leaving the threat ‘formless’ and ‘contentless’.” (Anderson, 2010d: 230). Brian Massumi (2010: 59) makes a similar point and claims that, “An alert is not a referential statement under obligation to

correspond with precision to an objective state of affairs”, because, in his opinion, threat is not objective (Massumi, 2007). But again, the history of the HSAS suggests that a more nuanced conception might be required. Whilst HSAS alerts were vague at first (Reese, 2003), and implied that unspecified threats were a danger to the whole country (Hannah, 2006), later they took a more defined form and referred to particular locations that were deemed to be at risk (as discussed in Chapter 5). Indeed, as the very creation of the System attests, the entire HSAS project was predicated upon an attempt to give form to the ambiguous press releases of Ridge and other top officials, which had characterised the OHS’ early months (Fenzel, 2011, interview). These broad conceptions of how terror alerts like the HSAS operate, then, break down when the particular details of the latter are considered.

Given this, we might refine such conceptions by attempting to think about how and why particular people were actually affected by the HSAS during their everyday lives. Anderson (2010b: 22) has attempted to do this by suggesting that, “These [techniques, such as the HSAS] aim to distribute an affectively imbued orientation of ‘vigilance’ or ‘alertness’ into the rhythms of everyday life”, and indeed, Ridge (2004a) has stated specifically that he wanted to encourage vigilance in members of the population (see the previous section). Massumi (2005: 40, 32) has gone further and stated that, “Part of the affective training that the Bush color alert system assures is the engraining in the bodies of the populace of anticipatory affective response to signs of fear”, and that because of the HSAS, “Across the geographical and social differentials dividing them, the population fell into affective attunement.” In other words, he not only sees this attempt to instil vigilance by the DHS as having been successful, but that the entire ‘population’ was affected. Certainly, the HSAS does seem to have increased vigilance in particular people: Mary Lou Reker (2012, interview), a government employee in DC, recalls that she would sometimes alter her travel routine in response to a Code Orange; and others, including Christine Fox (2012, pers. comm), a student in the US in 2004, and Joan Mower (2012, interview), a former State Department official, have recalled similar stories about either themselves or others (and see, too, BBC News, 2003e; Purtle, 2007). But does this mean that the HSAS affected everyone in the same way?

There are, I think, two points that need to be made with regard to Massumi’s (2005) totalising claim. First, given the constraints of any researcher and the sheer size of America in terms of both population and geography, it is misleading to say that the entire population reacted in a certain manner across the entire country. Second, and following this, I think that a more nuanced conception of which people in particular were affected might be desirable, which ascribes to the more embodied conceptions

of affect and emotion suggested elsewhere (Anderson and Smith, 2001; Nash, 2000; Pain, 2009; 2010; Protevi, 2009; Sharp, 2009; Thien, 2005). Even those few examples given through the interviews above, for example, might suggest that the effect of the HSAS upon particular people was more pronounced in certain locations, such as transportation hubs and networks. These interviews were conducted after the bombings in Madrid (2003) and London (2007), for example, both of which suggested that al Qaeda had a preference for attacking transportation networks; as, indeed, the 9/11 attacks themselves had shown. Again, we should be careful not to make definitive statements here else the simplified conception of who and how the HSAS affected will be embraced by accident, but we might at least wonder, with reference to Barnett (2008), whether the fear precipitated in some by an HSAS alert was not felt more keenly in certain locations than others; whether it had its own geographies.

Moreover, we do not need to rely solely upon the accounts and interviews above to answer this question. Whilst Massumi (2005: 32) suggests that, “The whole [American] population became a network jumpiness [in response to the HSAS]”, both Grusin (2010) and Hannah (2010) have noted that such claims are simply not substantiated by the evidence. Blanton (2002), for example, has stated that the reactions of the American ‘public’ to the System covered a wide spectrum between interest and disinterest; from those that considered it “background noise”, to others that called it “as effective as it humanly can be” (Anderson, 2004; BBC News, 2003e; Vlahos, 2003). Moreover, such opinions, according to the major surveys of public opinion on the HSAS, varied over time.<sup>99</sup> These surveys indicate that knowledge and opinions of the HSAS shifted from the period of its implementation up until its last alert in 2006, and not necessarily in any single direction. And if time was one axis across which the affectivity of the System varied, space was another. Eisenman et al. (2009), as we have seen, found that the affectivity of the HSAS was differentiated according to factors including race and gender. By noting how different people were differently able to affect and be affected, then, we might again note the importance of ‘power geometries’ to such accounts (Thien, 2005).

Of course, even though it is incorrect to talk of a singular ‘population’ that was influenced by the HSAS, it is necessary to resort to such shorthand comments in other respects. Simply put, it is beyond the scope of this research – perhaps any research – to pin down exactly who was affected by the System, but at the same time

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<sup>99</sup> See Amegashie and Kutsoati (2004), the American Enterprise Institute (2008), Bowman (2003), Huang (2002), Major and Atwood (2004), Mayhorn, Wogalter and Shaver (2004), Nacos, Bloch-Elkon and Shapiro (2011), Rodriguez and Lee (2010), Stewart, McLean and Huckaby (2006), and Tumulty, Calabresi and Rubiner (2004).



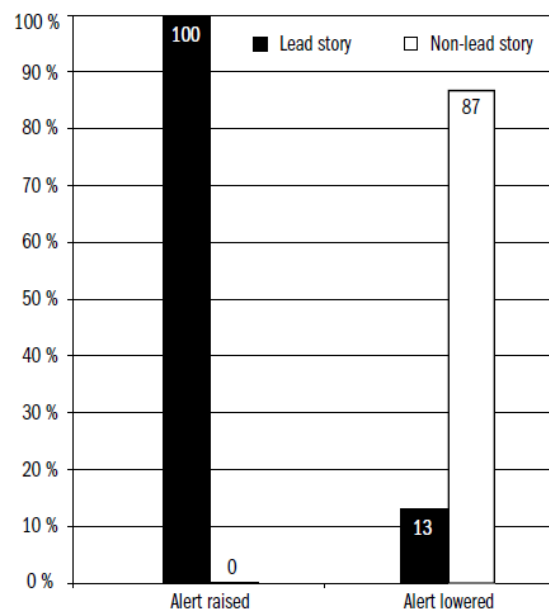
it is clear that certain people were affected as Willer's research attests; and for our purposes here it is difficult to discuss these people in any way other than as a 'group', if for no other reason than grammatical simplicity. The remainder of this section, then, considers some of the ways that the HSAS might have been affective in the manner that Willer (2004) suggests; the 'how' and the 'why' of his findings as it were, rather than the 'whom'. Throughout, though, it seeks to be tentative with its claims and seeks especially to avoid positing its own metageography of the American population. The works cited above, particularly that of Eisenman et al. (2009), indicate some of demographic aspects of the HSAS' affectivity, but they are considered here to be only this: indications. Again, the work of Brian Massumi (2005) will be drawn upon in an attempt to further refine this account of the HSAS' affectivity.



**Figure 36: A terror alert ticker on Fox News (Peoples Underground, 2013)**

In order to approach an answer to this 'how' and 'why', I would like to briefly invoke Pile's (2010: 8) suggestion that affect occurs temporally prior to the "translation of an affect into a knowable emotion". As mentioned, fear has been frequently referred to as the primary reaction of persons to the HSAS, no doubt because the System suggested that a terrorist attack might occur; a necessarily frightening proposition, even if not everyone necessarily reacted to this in the same way. And the efficacy of fear to politicians has been elaborated upon by Hyndman (2007: 361, emphasis in original): "Fear", she says, "is a potent political resource that is at once an expression of vulnerability to geopolitical threats and a rationale for security measures against them. It is produced through tropes of nationalism rooted in economic marginalization, loss of territory, and anxieties about invasions of home. Such

anxieties give rise to the *securitization of fear* used to underwrite the allocation of resources to fortify borders and manage risk.” Certainly, this would seem an appropriate statement for the HSAS in this context, and it is important to note that fear in Hyndman’s conception is also associated with other tropes, such as nationalism and patriotism, which have also been suggested as emotional reactions to the HSAS (Willer, 2004). The fear triggered by the HSAS in some, then, might also have been part of other emotional reactions.



**Figure 37: TV coverage of HSAS alerts (Nacos et al., 2007)**

At the same time, we might take a further step back in order to understand how this fear is realised in the first place. This is where the theoretical insights of affect can be useful because they concern, as Pile (2010) has said, the period prior to the emergence of fully-formed emotions; the less-than-conscious. Thus, it is a criticism of Massumi’s (2005) account of the HSAS’ affectivity that he ignores the ways in which this affectivity is communicated in the first place, “thereby failing to make sense of how TV works together with the web, movies, newspapers, cellphones, or video games, in complex media formations to manipulate affectivity after 9/11.” (Grusin, 2010: 120) (Figure 36). Nacos (2007), for example, in a survey of television news coverage of the System, found that increases of the alert were always reported as lead stories across major American television channels, but that decreases never were (Figure 37). “Similarly, the average length of stories reporting on Washington officials increasing nationwide terror-alert levels was five minutes and twenty seconds, compared to only one minute and thirty-four seconds for decreases in the official

alert status.” (Nacos, 2007: 189). For something to be affective it must be appreciated by the senses first, and the media here dramatised the HSAS by biasing their coverage toward the System’s higher rather than lower alert levels; “amplifying them”, as Barkun (2011: 110) says, “in the process.” And we might note the irony here that the media, perhaps the preeminent site for discussing the HSAS’ potential manipulation, may also have been one of the key delivery mechanisms of the same.

Moreover, we might think about how colour, in particular, might have facilitated the amplification of the HSAS’ affects that Barkun (2011) describes; which is the contention of Behnke (2012). Colour has the ability, for example, to stress certain elements of an image and heighten their meaning (Rose, 2007; Broudy, 2009, respectively), which, in turn, “induces moods and [ultimately] emotions” (Aslam, 2006: 15). Indeed, the automatic association of red with danger, and green with safety (see Heller, 2004; Lüscher, 1970), was one of the reasons that Mike Byrne (2012, interview) decided to include them within the HSAS in the first place. But perhaps this association also had effects that were not intended, and that the power of colour in this instance, as it were, could not be controlled. As the story of the HSAS’ creation attests (Chapter 4), the intention was that colours would aid communication and affect people in ways that the OHS deemed productive; reminding them of the threat of terrorism, certainly, but so that they would undertake security measures for their own benefit and that of others. For some, though, perhaps the danger associated with red, because of coloured imagery’s especial ability to affect beneath the level of conscious awareness (Barry, 1997; Elliot et al., 2007), ultimately spurred fearfulness, which might have led to the increased support of President Bush that Willer (2004) describes.

But why might this have been the case? We should certainly refine the suggestion that the HSAS’ colours alone triggered some kind of magical reaction in the viewer that automatically increased support for President Bush (Grossberg, 2010). And the work of Landau et al. (2004) is instructive here. They concluded that over the 2004 election season, when Secretary Ridge was apparently pressured to raise the HSAS level, “President Bush’s popularity [was] increased when thoughts of death or terrorism [were] especially salient”. By contrast, “MS significantly reduced support for presidential candidate John Kerry.” (Landau et al., 2004: 1148). Therefore, a possible affectual chain of causality might be that the HSAS was disseminated through the media, amongst other places (Mueller, 2006), and for some triggered subconscious thoughts of mortality – partly because of the symbolism of its colours – which in turn precipitated a level of fear and disposed a person to vote for Bush. Such a disposition might have been a product of, for example, the President’s and the

GOP's national security credentials (discussed above), or Bush's aggressive policies in the war on terror. Again, when engaging with questions of affectivity, it is necessary to be somewhat speculative and this is only one possible notion of the HSAS' affectivity. It is, though, predicated upon several literatures that have already considered these questions and presents, I think, a plausible sequence through which the HSAS' affectivity might have resulted in increased support for Bush. Either way, it has hopefully demonstrated that in approaching such questions at all, Massumi's (2005) conception of a singular population might be productively nuanced.

### ***Conclusions***

There are two questions that we might ask of accusations that the HSAS was politically manipulated. First, are the accusations true; were people affected in the way that these accusations suggest? And second, what might we say more broadly about the HSAS' affectivity? Whilst political calculations were undoubtedly involved in decisions to raise the HSAS level, the contradiction between the beliefs of Tom Ridge and Donald Rumsfeld, amongst others, can only be fully resolved by further revelations in the manner of the former's memoirs. Thus, conclusions can only be tenuous and in this respect this chapter has attempted to add to the empirical record of this debate, rather than offer a definitive statement. What is perhaps more interesting for the purposes of this thesis is what this episode suggests about the differing affectivity of the HSAS upon both homeland security officials and the broader American population at this time. At least partially, those in control of the System appear to have been differently affected by their perceived threat of terrorism, with some fearing a potential future strike more than others and the HSAS acting as a visible conduit for this fear. In this way, their fear of another terrorist attack resonated with their decision over whether to change the HSAS, with some, such as Donald Rumsfeld, believing that it should be and others, such as Ridge, that it should not. With respect to why certain members of the American population then appear to have been more affected by the HSAS' warnings than others, at least with regard to their proclivity toward voting for President Bush, we can offer one, possible causal chain. The HSAS, communicated primarily through the media, triggered thoughts of mortality and fear in some, which were manifested as greater support for President Bush in a still smaller group. Colour, with its ability to affect beneath the radar of conscious awareness, seems likely have played a part in this, but only in combination with other thoughts and beliefs, such as the notion that the GOP was the political party best able to protect the nation.

## **8. The end of the rainbow:**

### **The conclusions of the HSAS and this thesis**

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Although accusations of political manipulation did not immediately lead to the HSAS' dissolution, they were a shock to the System from which, in conjunction with its practical limitations (Chapter 5) and satirical denunciations (Chapter 6), it appears that the HSAS never fully recovered (Stückrath, 2011). In 2007, then Senator Barack Obama (2007), recalling Bush's record on homeland security, stated that, "Instead [of a secure homeland], we got a color-coded politics of fear. Patriotism as the possession of one political party." His message was clear: the HSAS alerts were a GOP tactic, just like the claims of some Republicans in the aftermath of 9/11 that those opposing their national security policies were unpatriotic (Brunn, 2004). After Obama's election, his new Homeland Security Secretary, Janet Napolitano, followed the President's lead and decided that the System was no longer required and by 2011 it was gone. The process of the System's removal, though, was not straightforward and this chapter explores the 'political space' that Napolitano created in order to facilitate the HSAS's retirement. It also analyses the HSAS' replacement, the National Terrorism Advisory System (NTAS), and examines other legacies of the HSAS, both foreign and domestic. Finally, it offers an appraisal of the HSAS that following calls for normative geographies (Graham, 1997), considers whether terror alert warnings systems are desirable at all, and offers a set of conclusions for this thesis.

#### **8.1 The Homeland Security Advisory Council and the creation of 'political space'**

On July 14, 2009, less than six months after the election of President Obama, the President's new DHS Secretary, Janet Napolitano, slated the HSAS for review (DHS, 2009d; Terror alert, 2009). Just as a 45-day comment period had accompanied the HSAS' implementation, so a 60-day comment period attended the beginning of its demise (or at least, what would later become known as the beginning of its demise). The HSAS, as Chapter 5 attests, had been reviewed previously by Congress and other government oversight organisations, but this review was different: it represented not just an evolution of the System, but the start of a process that would create the political manoeuvring room needed to dissolve the HSAS entirely. In justifying her decision to reappraise the HSAS, Napolitano suggested that, "It ['Code Orange'] was a phrase that didn't have a precise meaning and I think that perhaps lost its meaning as time went on." (Solomon, 2009). At the same time, we again need to problematise the

notion that government action, such as that of the DHS, occurs either unilaterally or smoothly (Martin and Simon, 2008; Massumi, 2005). Just as political considerations and a multiplicity of actors had marked the creation of the HSAS and its lifespan, it was also important in its dissolution and replacement.

Secretary Napolitano's decision to review the System in 2009 had precedence. As mentioned in Chapter 5, Secretary Michael Chertoff had demonstrated a marked antipathy toward the System; issuing just two alerts during his tenure, in 2005 and 2006. Chertoff had already asserted his desire to leave office at the same time that President Bush did, regardless of whether a Democratic or Republican administration replaced Bush's, and so ordered the Homeland Security Advisory Council (HSAC) to author a document by the end of his tenure that detailed, "The top ten challenges facing the next Secretary of Homeland Security" (HSAC, 2008).<sup>100</sup> The Council's purpose was to expedite the transition from one administration to the next; a purpose of especial importance for a department so concerned with public safety that any disjuncture between authorities could be detrimental to the wider national good. And on page 13 of their final report, the Council recommended that, "It [risk communication] also involves improving crisis communications systems such as the color-coded homeland security advisory system (which should be revisited and revised to have meaning for the average American)".

Although it was ultimately Napolitano's decision to scrap the HSAS, there are other antecedents to her decision, too; in addition to Chertoff's recommendation. For example, James Carafano (2011, interview) recalls that David Heyman, who was sworn in as DHS Assistant Secretary for Policy in June, 2009, helped drive the process of reviewing the HSAS. Carafano (2011, interview) had previously worked with Heyman at the Heritage Foundation and suggests that, "when he [Heyman] went into government, he went in with an agenda to change that [HSAS]." For his part, Secretary Ridge has also implied that he influenced the unofficial redevelopment process, stating that, "I've talked to Secretary Napolitano of changing it, of modifying it a little bit. She's reached out to me on several occasions" (Klein and Ridge, 2010). For obvious reasons, it is difficult to corroborate either of these claims, or the extent to which the HSAC's (2008) transitional report influenced Napolitano's decision to ultimately scrap the System, but what is noteworthy here is that her decision was part of a wider set of political circumstances and negotiations in which the HSAS was being rethought. It would, as such, be an oversimplification to suggest that Secretary Napolitano unilaterally scrapped the System.

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<sup>100</sup> Signifying, again, the somatic marker of 9/11 in homeland security and American politics (Ó Tuathail, 2003), the HSAC released their report on September 11, 2008.

Secretary Napolitano's reticence to dissolve the System alone was also politically expedient. What if, months after she had removed the HSAS, a terrorist attack had occurred? Although the System had proved itself inadequate in many respects, Republicans would surely have seized upon the opportunity of making political capital out of the Secretary's decision to disband a terrorist warning apparatus, just as the requirement for one had arisen. Once introduced, a tool designed to mitigate the impact of a terrorist attack is not so easily removed, irrespective of the opprobrium that it might have received during its period of implementation. As such, Napolitano turned to the body that Chertoff had used to ease the transition from the Bush to Obama administrations, the Homeland Security Advisory Council, to help decide the fate of the HSAS and legitimate her decision regarding the System's future. The Council appointed an ad-hoc Homeland Security Advisory System Task Force whose mission was to provide an objective appraisal of the HSAS, its limitations, and how they could best be ameliorated (DHS, 2009d). To do this, they were assisted by the Department of Justice (HSAC, 2009a). Just as the Attorney General had initially been given responsibility for determining the HSAS threat level, it seems that the Department of Justice was being used again to add validity to a decision regarding the System.

For Charles Peña (2012, interview) of the Cato Institute, the Task Force's appointment, but also its constitution and recommendations, were entwined with the political agendas of Napolitano and the new administration. The HSAC itself demonstrated the overlap between government, security and business, reflecting the fact that homeland security, as mentioned, has become a multi-billion dollar enterprise in the US, in which huge profits can be reaped from the acquisition of lucrative government contracts (Ingram and Dodds, 2011; Bennett, 2006). Indeed, as discussed in Chapter 5, the HSAS itself was partially exploited in the interests of private profit, and the HSAC, for its part, consisted of representatives from Lockheed Martin, the MITRE Corporation, Boeing, and even Walt Disney Parks and Resorts, in the form of Chairman Jay Rasulo (HSAC, 2008); the Disney Corporation having already contributed to the HSAS' development (Ridge, 2009), as we have seen. In other words, the HSAC was partially constituted of members of some of the largest corporations in the US, including both those that supplied technology for the homeland security effort and those that were most affected by its security measures. In addition, we might note again how the war on terror has partly been about securing the neoliberal economy (Morrissey, 2011b); here, the DHS wanted to ensure that private industry would not be adversely affected by any potential revision of the System.

The Task Force, though, if its recommendations were to be deemed fair by the GOP and other observers, needed to be seen as without partisan political bias. It was, as such, shorn of any of the commercial and business interests that partly constituted the HSAC. Its members included many of the persons that had already been part of the HSAS' history, including Randy Beardsworth, the former DHS Under-Secretary; James Carafano of the Heritage Foundation, who we might recall testified on the HSAS before Congress; and Clark Ervin of the Aspen Institute, a former DHS Inspector General (DHS, 2009d). Former Secretaries Ridge and Chertoff, and Shawn Reese of the CRS, were also brought in as 'subject matter experts' (HSAC, 2009a), and Rich Cooper provided stakeholder feedback on the System, too (HSAC, 2009b). Moreover, presumably to avoid the appearance of partisanship, the Task Force was co-chaired by two Republicans: William Webster, the former Director of the FBI and the CIA; and Fran Townsend, Bush's third Homeland Security Director, whose attack on Ridge's credibility in the wake of accusations that the HSAS had been political manipulated would occur just one month after her appointment (see previous chapter). Certainly, no one could accuse Napolitano of appointing a biased panel to decide on the HSAS' future; which was, presumably, the point.<sup>101</sup>

In contrast to the 2004 congressional hearings, which did not hear from any of the academic writers on the HSAS, the Task Force did consult two academics that had studied the System, Phillip Zimbardo (McDermott and Zimbardo, 2007; Zimbardo, 2003; Zimbardo and Kluger, 2003) and David Ropeik (Gray and Ropeik, 2002), who both contributed to stakeholder feedback (HSAC, 2009b). In addition, Zimbardo mentioned that the HSAS was frequently discussed on his course, 'Psychology of terrorism', at the Monterey Naval Postgraduate School. This perhaps explains why so many dissertations published by students at that institution concerned the HSAS (Chapters 2 and 3). Other stakeholder feedback was received from agencies including Connecticut's Department of Emergency Management and Homeland Security (2009) and the International Association of the Chiefs of Police (2011). Again, these are organisations with aims and expertise that added political credibility to the review process. Then President of the Navajo Nation, Joe Shirley, also sat on the HSAC (HSAC, 2009a); ostensibly, in the opinion of Randy Beardsworth (2012, interview), to be respectful to Native American governance; a particular priority of the

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<sup>101</sup> The appointment of such experienced homeland security operatives may also have been partly to assuage concerns about limitations of the DHS; a department that was increasingly attracting opprobrium by 2008 (Clarke, 2008). The prestige of the HSAS Task Force suggested that even if the wider DHS might have been unsuccessful in many respects, this particular body could be trusted. Richard Clarke himself, whilst critical of the HSAS, was apparently reticent to offer his own solution to the problems that he ascribed to the latter (Fenzel, 2008c; 2008e).



Democratic Party. It is not to underestimate either Shirley's expertise or knowledge to suggest that his inclusion demonstrates, again, the political calculus that was applied to the selection process for the Council.

Former DHS Under Secretary, Randy Beardsworth (2012, interview), who sat on the Task Force, has cast much light on the creation of what he terms in this particular context, "political space". This space enabled Napolitano to achieve the result that she ultimately wanted, which was the cessation of a policy that as she herself claimed, had no precise meaning (Solomon, 2009). When it was suggested to Beardsworth (2012, interview) that part of the Task Force's efficacy was that it built "credibility for the change [from one system to the other]", Beardsworth concurred: "Yes, and then you put people on there who are credible, you put people on there who are going to be influencers [such as those listed above, including presumably the Under Secretary himself]". "So, were we independent? Yes. But, we were part of an effort that had a pre-desired outcome." (Beardsworth, 2012, interview). Clark Ervin (2012, interview), who also sat on the Task Force, appears to agree, suggesting that many on the panel were of a single mind and that it had become clear that the System was not working. For his part, James Carafano states that he had an aversion to the System (Carafano, 2011, interview; Carafano and Zuckerman, 2010), and thus a significant proportion of those appointed to the Task Force had a history of opposition to the HSAS, or were aware that the Secretary who had appointed them desired a particular result: the System's dissolution.<sup>102</sup>

Political space was created in other ways, too, including through the encouragement of public feedback on the System via a dedicated DHS email address – which had not occurred after the introduction of the HSAS – and a summary of the 141 comments duly received demonstrated that opinions were highly critical (DHS, 2009a). Some 82% requested that the HSAS be either altered or replaced, and that of all its limitations, colours were the System's most serious flaw (DHS, 2009a). In addition, "[a majority] voiced their concern for the political manipulation behind the system and the need to infuse more specific information and possible action plans with the threats [alert levels]" (DHS, 2009a). The fact that accusations around the HSAS' political manipulation figured so prominently in criticisms also testifies to the popular reception of the debates detailed in the previous chapter. It is also interesting that the Task Force's final report, ultimately approved by Fran Townsend, was forced to address – albeit briefly – accusations that the HSAS was manipulated for political

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<sup>102</sup> The exact methodology of the Task Force is not known. What is known is that meetings were held both in person and via teleconference (HSAC, 2009a), and that a voice vote at the latter ultimately approved the final report (HSAC, 2009c). The proceedings of the Task Force itself have not been made public.

purposes, presumably because of comments pertaining to this in the public feedback. Townsend herself, we might recall, would later become embroiled in discussions that the HSAS level had been manipulated for political gain (see previous chapter).<sup>103</sup>

The final report made a number of recommendations, which demonstrated that Napolitano, in terms of her own interests, had balanced appointments to the Task Force appropriately. Half of its members suggested that the colour-codes should, in some form, be retained (presumably a faction led by Townsend), but for the rest, “the color code system has suffered from a lack of credibility and clarity leading to an erosion of public confidence such that it should be abandoned.” (HSAC, 2009a: 2). Consensus, though, was gained on the need for the levels beneath Code Yellow to be removed as they were superfluous, and that a ‘sunset provision’ should be included in any new system, which automatically lowered the level to the lowest possible setting if no credible intelligence suggested otherwise after a certain period of time (HSAC, 2009a). The final report’s recommendations, though, also demonstrated a high level of carelessness. Perhaps most oddly, it referred to the HSAS as the “Homeland Security Alert System” on two separate occasions (HSAC, 2009a: 4, 10). It also suggested that of the three new levels that it recommended, the lowest should be coloured yellow, but annotated with the word, ‘guarded’ (HSAC, 2009a). Given that ‘guarded’ on the original HSAS had always conformed to Code Blue, this provision was potentially confusing. In short, the report was the product of a panel that appeared to have only limited interest in the System, and who had been appointed, at least in part, to achieve a particular political outcome rather than offer a full and balanced appraisal of the HSAS.

This intentional lack of clarity was particularly obvious by virtue of the final report’s inattentiveness to accusations that the HSAS was manipulated by the Bush administration for political gain; a key element of the System’s history, as Chapter 7 discusses. As mentioned, the majority of public comments submitted to the review had highlighted this aspect of the System, particularly, as a reason that it should be disbanded. Fran Townsend, though, who had chaired meetings of the HSC at which the threat level had been determined during her time as Homeland Security Advisor, from 2004-2007, might have wanted to avoid such inference in the report. Indeed, Townsend herself was responding to Ridge’s accusations that the HSAS had been manipulated just the month before the HSAC’s report was issued, so it seems unlikely that it would not have been in her mind when the report was being finalised. The only

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<sup>103</sup> The humorousness of the System was not mentioned at all, perhaps because the official report treated the HSAS a serious tool of public policy, and such comments may have been deemed outside of its purview.

reference to this highly important and topical aspect of the System in the HSAC's (2009a: 6) final publication came under the sub-heading (ironically), 'Fullest transparency', in which it was suggested that any future system would have to demonstrate, "the complete absence of political interest in the decision process." But Townsend herself had suggested that political discussion did take place when determining the HSAS just the month before, in her response to the publication of Ridge's memoirs. In this sense, it seems fair to say that a week is a long time in politics.<sup>104</sup>

## **8.2 The National Terrorism Advisory System and Janet Napolitano**

Of course, this intra-Task Force politicking did not matter for Napolitano's ultimate purpose, even if it does attest to the importance of interpersonal communication at this point in the HSAS' history. Whilst members of the Task Force may have had their own political agendas, so did the Secretary. Thus, in announcing the NTAS in early 2011, after leaving over a year for the DHS to 'digest' the Task Force's findings, Napolitano (2011) stated that, "It [the NTAS] was largely the work of a bipartisan task force that included law enforcement, former Mayors and Governors, and members of the previous administration. Some of them are here today, and I thank them, and ask for a round of applause for their great work that led to this new tool in our homeland security arsenal." But what Napolitano did not mention was that half of this Task Force had asked for colours to be retained and the entire task force had been unanimous in its desire for three levels (HSAC, 2009a). The NTAS that Napolitano ultimately unveiled, however, had no colours at all and just two levels. It conformed better to the Task Force's recommendations that social media be employed, 'sunset provisions' be enacted, and alerts be only ever geographically specific (although, of course, by the end the HSAS was already doing this) (see DHS, 2011a; 2011b; 2011e; 2011f), but ignored other proposals of the final report (HSAC, 2009a).<sup>105</sup>

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<sup>104</sup> In challenging Ridge's accusations, Townsend also mentioned the Task Force's proceedings specifically. Why, she wondered, had Ridge not mentioned his concerns about political manipulation of the System during these hearings? (Sharma, 2009). In answer, perhaps Ridge wanted to save the accusations to boost sales of his book, or perhaps he felt that it was an inappropriate forum given that Townsend was co-chairing the Task Force and had chaired the HSC meeting of October 30, 2004, too (Chapter 7).

<sup>105</sup> One of the reasons that Napolitano may have wanted to stamp her authority on the new NTAS was that she, just as Ridge had in the early years of the DHS, was attempting to create a particular homeland security 'brand'. This included a focus upon recruiting everyday citizens into homeland security practices (DHS, ndb), and the introduction of the vigilance campaign, 'If you see something, say something' (DHS, 2011c), imported from New York (Anonymous, 2011, interview; New York Office of Counterterrorism, nd). The NTAS, with its greater emphasis on particular rather than generic threats, was arguably better suited to such an approach.

In aggregate, the NTAS itself and the process that created it appear to have been partly implemented simply to avoid the Republican opprobrium that would no doubt have come swiftly if terror alerts had been curtailed completely, especially by the American political party that, as mentioned previously, has often been considered weak on national security (Peña, 2012, interview). Testifying to this is the fact that, as yet, the NTAS has not been used, despite extensive media reports on the ten-year anniversary of 9/11 that terrorist attacks were imminent (Lee and Entous, 2011), and the 2013 Boston Marathon attacks, too (see below). In many ways, it is also ironic that the NTAS after this entire process ended up with just two levels, ‘elevated’ and ‘imminent’ (DHS, 2011b), which mirrored a predecessor that excepting a few days in 2006 bounced only between two levels, as well: Codes Yellow (itself called ‘elevated’) and Orange. Indeed, when the author mentioned to Mike Byrne that his addition to the HSAS, colour, had been removed in the new design, Byrne (2012, interview) replied, perhaps somewhat tongue-in-cheek, that actually not even this aspect had been changed. Rather than red, orange, yellow, blue and green, he said, the colours were now much simpler: black and white (Byrne, 2012, interview). Indeed, if we construe the absence of any alert as a level in itself, then the NTAS could be considered to have three levels, making it even more similar to its predecessor (Beardsworth, 2012, interview), and in this way, closer to the recommendations of the HSAS Task Force (HSAC, 2009a).

Although Secretary Ridge and his team had considered the satire that the HSAS might receive upon its release in 2002 (Fenzel, 2011, interview; Ridge, 2009), they had implemented no concrete plan to attempt to ameliorate the impacts of such criticism, as we have seen. After the initial onslaught by satirists, Ridge, through his letter to *The Wall Street Journal*, had attempted to keep the HSAS ‘on message’ and ‘negotiate’ the System’s humour (Ridanpää, 2009). The opening-day salvos from late-night satirists such as Jon Stewart, though, had arguably already set a popular tenor from which no full rehabilitation was possible. Humour, in the end, had been at least part of the reason for the HSAS’ downfall (Wermuth, 2012, interview), even if we should be somewhat circumspect about its effects (Chapter 6), and Napolitano appeared determined that the same fate would not befall the NTAS. The Secretary had already taken the sensible step of removing colours from the NTAS – which were one of the HSAS’ most mocked elements, as we have seen – but who could Napolitano turn to if she wanted to ‘manage’ possible satire of the System from the very start? The answer, of course, was the same man that had done so much to undermine the HSAS through humour: Jon Stewart.

Just as Stewart had been there at the birth of the HSAS, so Napolitano wanted him there at the System's death, too; using the host and his show as a vehicle through which the HSAS' dissolution could be justified (Schwartz, 2010). No doubt Napolitano was aware of Stewart's previous criticisms of the HSAS and the sympathetic host and audience she was likely receive for her criticisms of the System, accordingly. Thus, Napolitano appeared on Stewart's show on October 19, 2009 – less than a month after the Task Force's report had been released – and suggested that the colour codes failed to communicate anything of merit to the American public and that they would be scrapped under the new system, NTAS; a decision that clearly pleased Stewart (Stewart and O'Neil, 2009). Napolitano's appearance on the show also attested to the profound connection that Stewart had had with the HSAS throughout its period of implementation and that Napolitano, over 18 months before the System was actually disbanded, was already attempting to exercise a certain level of discursive control over the HSAS. If the NTAS was going to feature on shows like Stewart's, she would attempt to keep this on her own terms. Again, we might note how Napolitano here was attempting to negotiate humour of the HSAS, just as Ridge had seven years earlier (Ridanpää, 2009).

Such control was consolidated with two press conferences that Napolitano used to introduce the NTAS to the American public. In the first (January, 2011), Napolitano specifically addressed the George Washington University Homeland Security Policy Institute during a recorded speech that she entitled, 'State of America's Homeland Security', to mirror President Obama's State of the Union address, which had taken place two days earlier. By calling her speech this, Napolitano was imaginatively suggesting that the threat of terrorism would exist long into the future, given that States of the Union have been made annually since 1790. Perhaps by mentioning the system at an academic venue first, rather than the politically-affiliated Constitution Hall that Ridge had chosen to unveil the HSAS, Napolitano was also hoping that an air of academic credibility would be given to the NTAS. George Washington University was less than a mile away from Constitution Hall, but unlike the latter not part of the clutch of government buildings around the Washington Ellipse (see Chapter 3). Indeed, the Homeland Security Policy Institute (nd) is a self-proclaimed nonpartisan think tank, suggesting that the selection of the site for the first announcement of the NTAS was far from arbitrary in this sense.<sup>106</sup> At the same time, of course, George Washington University was also part of what Morrissey (2011a: 436) has called, "the military-strategic studies complex"; "a powerful, well-funded

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<sup>106</sup> Perhaps surprisingly, the Institute itself appears to have never commented on the HSAS according to its archives, excepting the attention that they gave to its dissolution (Homeland Security Policy Institute, 2011).

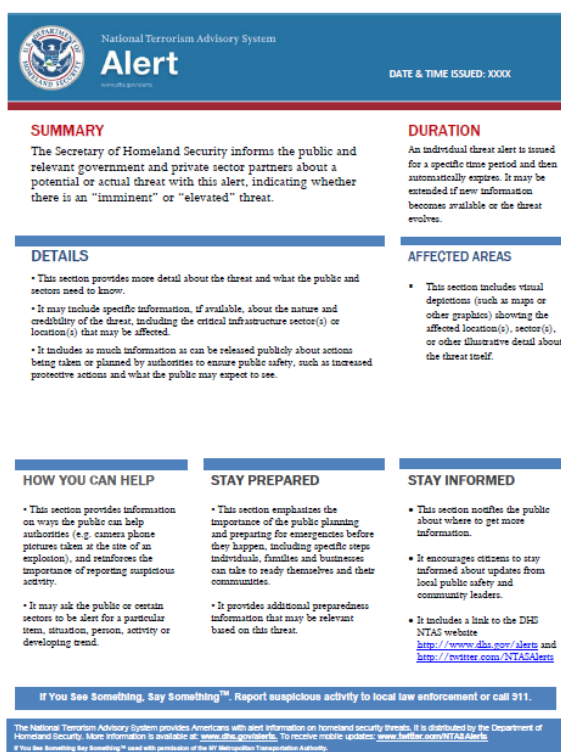
assemblage of policy institutes, military colleges and university departments”. It may have been an academic venue, but it was not devoid of government influence.



**Figure 38: Janet Napolitano introduces the NTAS (Zimbardo, 2011)**

Few details were given about the NTAS, though, until the second press conference, which accompanied the actual implementation of the new system (April, 2011) (Figure 38). Whilst Napolitano had announced the NTAS alone at George Washington University, at this press conference Napolitano was flanked by politicians from both sides of the aisle, including: Representatives Peter King (R-NY), then chairman of the House Committee on Homeland Security, who had sat on the first of the two 2004 congressional hearings on the HSAS (*Hearing* [Select Committee], 2004); and Carolyn Maloney (D-NY), co-founder of the bipartisan House 9/11 Commission Caucus with Representative Christopher Shays, who had sat on the second congressional hearing on the HSAS (*Hearing* [Subcommittee], 2004). Just as with the first press conference and the review process, Napolitano was attempting to shield the new system from accusations of partisan self-interest. The presence of King and Maloney also addressed a criticism of the HSAS that had been made at the very committee upon which King had sat, in which it was suggested that the HSAS, “[had been] called into existence without the benefit of congressional action” (*Hearing* [Select Committee], 2004: 1). We might also note here that, as Young (2003) says, women have sometimes been the most forthright proponents of the homeland security state, but that they are still often seen through masculine tropes. Napolitano, for example, has long had to answer questions regarding her

sexual orientation, given that she has never married, and arguably this has been part of the media discourse that has determined whether she is capable of her job (Solomon, 2009).



**Figure 39: The National Terrorism Advisory System (DHS, 2011b)**

In addition, by hosting the announcement at Grand Central station in New York and inviting congressional representatives and firefighters from that same state to witness the NTAS' unveiling, Napolitano was linking the system to the somatic marker of 9/11; legitimising her new policy by reference to the terror of those attacks, just as Rove had with the 2004 Republican convention. As well, she was implicitly asserting that this system would be more applied, practical and thus useful than its predecessor. Rather than the generic alerts of the HSAS in its early days, the NTAS would issue warnings that were geographically or sector-specific from the start, such as those that might apply to locations like Grand Central (Figure 39). Napolitano also chose to display the new system on an easel to her left, just as Ridge had with the HSAS nine years previously. By pointing and gesturing when commenting on the new system she emphasised its message, connecting the NTAS inviolably to herself. Unlike Ridge, though, she was also sharing some of the responsibility for the system by standing shoulder-to-shoulder with other politicians and security officials. Homeland security, she implied, was a collective effort; a theme that has defined

Napolitano's approach to her job (DHS, 2013). We might also suggest that by surrounding herself with the "hard bodies" of firefighters (Jeffords, 1994), often considered the heroes of 9/11, she was attempting to bolster the validity of her new system by reinforcing the tenets of masculinity and paternal protection, as above.<sup>107</sup>

In a similar vein to Ridge, Napolitano also paraded the NTAS virtually rather than materially on the morning shows of NBC, MSNBC, CNN and Fox News (Office of Public Affairs, 2011) (Chapter 4); emphasising the Secretary's recognition that the NTAS, perhaps even more than the HSAS, would be dependent upon news channels and their associated social media, in particular. Across the media-sphere, eulogies to the departing HSAS were also forthcoming, ranging from more neutral recollections that considered the System, "one of the signature post-Sept. 11 initiatives of the George W. Bush administration" (Miller, 2011), to more loaded (and numerous) attacks on the System's lack of efficacy of the type that had marked the HSAS' most active period from 2002 to 2004 so many years before (We never, 2011; Wolraich, 2011). In perhaps the final injustice to those that had put so much effort into creating the System, the Associated Press (2010b) eventually decided to talk to John Fenzel; the only journalistic account that appears to have ever thought to contact the man that created the System himself. But they spelt his name wrong, calling him 'John Fenzele', and failed to record his thoughts upon any of the substantive debates that had marked the creation of the HSAS in the first place (Associated Press, 2010b).

The bipartisan HSAS review process and unveiling of the NTAS had given legitimacy to the latter as a serious tool of public safety, and Napolitano's removal of colours and media offensive had ensured that satire would not come to dominate descriptions of the NTAS. However, the Secretary was less successful in ensuring that the new system was not politicised. Within months of the NTAS' release, Republicans were attempting to use the system to wrestle political capital back from the Democrats. After the assassination of Osama bin Laden, reports were rife that al Qaeda might attempt to attack the US in retaliation, but the NTAS remained unmoved (Booth and Norton-Taylor, 2011). Despite the ridicule, criticism and controversy that had dogged the HSAS' entire history, Senator Susan Collins (R-ME) was quick to state that from her perspective, "it just still seems prudent to temporarily, at least, elevate the threat level" (Morgan, 2011); which DHS Press Secretary, Matt Chandler (2011), responded to the next day by suggesting that intelligence was not yet specific enough to issue an

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<sup>107</sup> By removing the words 'homeland security' from the name of the new system, perhaps Napolitano was also trying to disassociate the NTAS from the politics of the previous administration. At the same time, the term 'national' is slightly confusing, as the DHS apparently intends to use the NTAS for geographically specific alerts rather than nationwide warnings.



NTAS warning. On the topic of terror alerts, for so long a noose around their neck, the Republicans apparently sensed that the tables could be turned. Collins had set a precedent, which was that enough time had passed since the dissolution of the HSAS for the Republicans to criticise the Democratic terror alert system, without the spectre of its predecessor being invoked to damage the Republicans still further.

In the wake of the Boston Marathon bombings in April, 2013, online media took over from Collins, with politically-laden queries asking why the NTAS had not been used; either before or after those attacks. Frequently, this criticism came from right-wing commentators on current affairs websites and discussion forums, such as Hot Air (Morrissey, 2013), Free Republic (2013), Conservative Byte (2013), Breitbart (Boyle, 2013) and the Glenn Beck-founded media channel, The Blaze (Hallowell, 2013). The latter even had the audacity to mention, in explicit comparison to the NTAS, “the many times that the HSAS system [sic] was changed and the public alerted throughout its use from 2002 until 2006” (Hallowell, 2013). The clear message was that “the Bush-era alert plan”, in the phrasing of The Blaze, had been far more effective than its successor, as demonstrated by the fact that it had been used more often (Hallowell, 2013). Of course, this overlooked the fact that all of the HSAS’ alert changes from 2002 to 2006 were false alarms, none of which were followed by either a terrorist attack or the announcement that potential attacks had been foiled. The public may have been ‘alerted’, but for no good reason. It also omitted the fact that from 2006 to 2011 the HSAS was still active, but not in use; exactly the same criticism that The Blaze was now levelling at the NTAS.

Opinions on the NTAS, then, are in flux and questions regarding its efficacy or otherwise continue to be debated. For John Fenzel’s (2011, interview) part, he believes that the new system represents a necessary evolution of the HSAS, but that the NTAS is in danger of being neglected.<sup>108</sup> Whilst he does not connect this lack of attention to any partisan agenda, Fenzel (2011, interview) still contends that, “you need somebody who’s in charge of it, who actually, at least a commission that determine what the threats are, if they meet all those different criteria [for changing the alert]”. The process for determining NTAS alerts has not been given even the partial clarity that the HSAS was afforded. Thus, in the public guidance accompanying the NTAS it is suggested that, “After reviewing the available information, the Secretary of Homeland Security will decide, in coordination with other Federal entities, whether an NTAS alert should be issued” (DHS, 2011b), but

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<sup>108</sup> Several other homeland security experts have tentatively embraced the NTAS, too, including Alan Capps (2012, interview), James Carafano (2012, interview), Michael Salmons (2012, interview), and Stephen Flynn (2012, interview); all of whom had reservations about the previous system.

that is all; the nature of the available information that will be consulted is left unremarked upon, as are the identities of the federal entities that will be consulted. The real problem might be that the NTAS simply has too much baggage to move forward effectively. In this sense, the NTAS is almost the definition of a ‘white elephant’; expensive, burdensome and with a marked lack of utility, but for political reasons something that cannot be easily removed. The Boston Marathon bombings, for example, may well ensure that the perceived need for warning systems such as the NTAS proceeds long into the future.

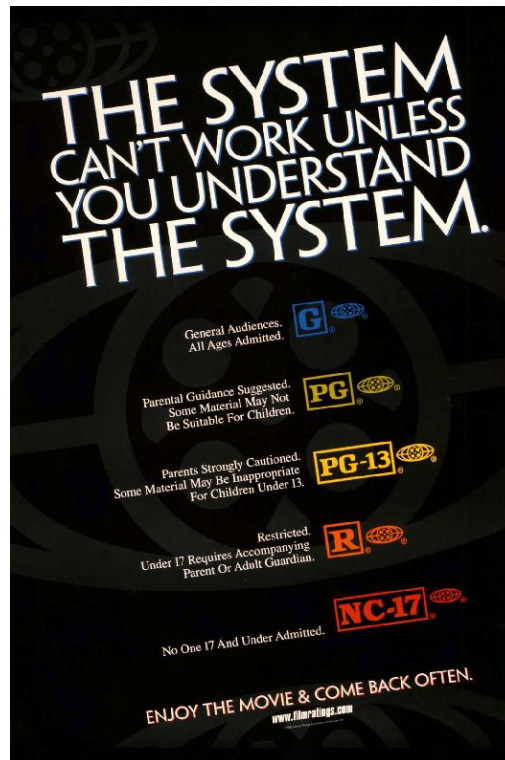
### 8.3 The foreign and domestic legacies of the HSAS



**Figure 40: MARSEC at the Whitehall ferry terminal, Manhattan (Author)**

Although the NTAS is the most famous echo of the HSAS, it is not the only vestige of a System that has had ramifications in other systems across America and, indeed, the rest of the world; in both security and non-security circles. MARSEC, the security alert system operated by the US Coast Guard pertaining to American ports and shipping, is perhaps the most visible domestic example of a system inspired by the HSAS that is still in use (Figure 40). As mentioned in Chapter 4, MARSEC was a partial inspiration for the HSAS itself, but was also altered in reaction to the introduction of the latter (Beardsworth, 2012, interview). MARSEC had always

consisted of three levels, which the Coast Guard defined as: level 1, minimum security measures; level 2, the imposition of additional security measures in the event of a direct threat to transportation security (presumably maritime); and level 3, an attack is either imminent or has already taken place (US Coast Guard, nd). In response to the introduction of the HSAS in 2002, level 1 became synonymous with Codes Green, Blue and Yellow; level 2, with Code Orange; and level 3, with Code Red. As a result, colours were added to all visual representations of MARSEC, so that this association would be explicit. It was deemed infeasible to alter an entire system that had great currency already within the Coast Guard (Beardsworth, 2012, interview). Despite the fact that MARSEC is now calibrated to the NTAS, the colours have remained.<sup>109</sup>



**Figure 41: CARA classification system (Film Ratings, 2012)**

Elsewhere, outside of American security culture, the HSAS' colours, if not its recommended actions, have also been adopted. The US Classification and Ratings Administration (CARA), a division of the Motion Picture Association of America, introduced a new colour-coded classification system after the implementation of the

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<sup>109</sup> The authority for changing the MARSEC level nationally lies with the Commandant of the Coast Guard rather than the Secretary of Homeland Security, even though the Coast Guard has been integrated into the DHS. MARSEC has also always had greater geographical flexibility, in that maritime security committees at every major port city are able to issue their own, specific alerts (Flynn, 2005).

HSAS, which is still in use today. The system, with five levels, runs through blue (general audiences), dark yellow (parental guidance suggested), light yellow (parental guidance strongly suggested), orange (restricted), and red (over 17 years of age only), in clear imitation of the HSAS (Adelman, 2009), and with the System's emphasis on increasing 'danger' as the level goes up (in this case, of being frightened or disturbed by a film's content) (Figure 41). The use of the HSAS' colour scheme for other civilian uses has also been touted; from coding fishing flies to ordering public library books (Cook, 2009; Blanchard, 2005). These are anecdotal examples, but demonstrate some of the wider discursive effects and resonances that the HSAS has had. Together with the material culture of MARSEC and the few posters produced by private companies, they represent the last domestic vestiges of a system that was once so widespread, and also attest, in many ways, to the System's adoption as a 'popular icon' (Raento, 2011).

Other adaptations of the System can also be found beyond the US' borders. Up until its dissolution in 2011, the HSAS inspired or altered the development of terror alert warning systems across the world, including those of the UK, France and Russia.<sup>110</sup> Prior to 9/11, the UK already had a terror alert system, BIKINI, which was established to calibrate the risk of attack by Irish Republican groups in the early 1970s (BBC, 2008; Thomson-Smith, 2011, interview). In the aftermath of 9/11, UK parliamentary hearings were held to ensure that British counterterrorist policy was as robust as possible, and terror warning systems were addressed briefly in three separate hearings (*Minutes of evidence*, 2002a; 2002b; 2003). In effect, these were the equivalent of the 2004 US congressional hearings on the HSAS (*Hearing* [Select Committee], 2004; *Hearing* [Subcommittee], 2004). Throughout these, there appeared a certain scepticism regarding the efficacy of alerts; perhaps reflecting the UK's longer history with terrorism and the impossibility of total protection. In response to questions from Labour MP Syd Rapson, a Home Office official stated that, "The system [BIKINI] we have in government buildings' for colour-coding has very specific meanings which are understood by the security staff and by those who work in those buildings... It is harder to see how you could extend that to a big area, let alone at a national level when the range of circumstances could be so great."

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<sup>110</sup> Other countries, including Australia, Israel, the Netherlands and South Korea, also have terror alert systems, but these were not directly inspired by the HSAS, which is why they are not focussed upon here (see Australian Government, 2011; Jerusalem Post, 2013; BBC News, 2013a; BBC News, 2013b, respectively).

(*Minutes of evidence*, 2003). In other words, the Home Office could not see the efficacy in upgrading BIKINI to better match the American approach.<sup>111</sup>

However, if these hearings had little effect on the development of the UK's approach, the UK's threat alert system was altered in response to contemporaneous events: the 2002 Bali bombings (Hewitt, 2008). In the UK government's official report on these attacks, authored by the Intelligence and Security Committee (2002), the existing threat level system operated by the Security Services was examined and recommended for development. Like BIKINI, this new system was still reserved for governmental buildings and employees rather than the general public, but this would change again in the aftermath of the London 7/7 bombings, in which controversy over the use of alert states would come to the fore again. Just as the 9/11 Commission had investigated the September 11 attacks in America, an inquiry in the UK examined the 7/7 attacks (Intelligence and Security Committee, 2006). In the report that followed, the government-only threat level system was singled out for particular attention (Intelligence and Security Committee, 2006). The Committee noted that in May, 2005, just weeks before the attacks, the Joint Terrorism Analysis Centre – created in June, 2003, and charged with determining the UK threat level (MI-5, nda; Thomson-Smith, 2011, interview; UK Home Office, 2010) – had decided to lower the alert level from 'severe general' to 'substantial' (Intelligence and Security Committee, 2006). Whilst the report did not attempt to apportion blame for this error, they recommended that the UK threat level system be given greater visibility; to ameliorate the fact that existing alerts were easily confused (Intelligence and Security Committee, 2006; Leppard, 2006).

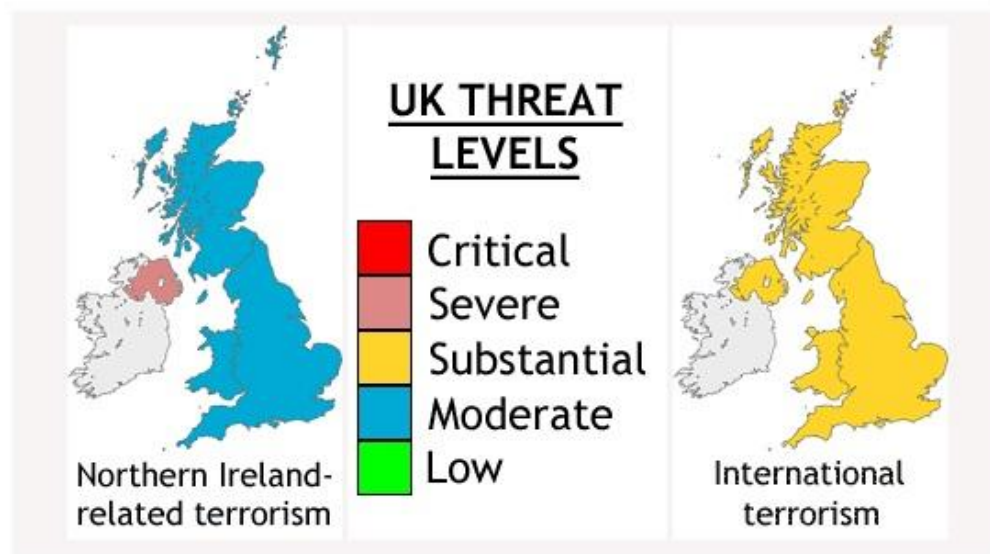
In the government reply to this report the recommendation that the UK threat level system be made more visible was embraced. This, the government suggested, "will enhance its effectiveness and increase public confidence and vigilance" (*Government response*, 2006). Soon afterward, in the words of a threat advisor at the Ministry of Defence, "it became public that we had a coherent system for international terrorism." (Thomson-Smith, 2011, interview).<sup>112</sup> Whilst the exact methodology behind an alteration of the alert level is classified, the highest level, 'critical', "means that an attack is likely to occur within the next 24-48 hours" (Thomson-Smith, 2011, interview). In other words, the timescale of a particular threat is paramount. If a

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<sup>111</sup> It is known that MI-6 were consulted by the GAO during their review of the HSAS in 2004, but the information that they gave to the Americans is classified (Sebastian, 2012, interview).

<sup>112</sup> The release of the UK threat level system to the general public, and its links to the HSAS, were picked up in America, too (Cowell, 2006), not least by the System's creator himself (Fenzel, 2008g).

threat was to be received by intelligence services, without any clear indication of when the attack was due to take place, the threat alert level would not be altered; even though classified additional security measures would be enacted (Thomson-Smith, 2011, interview). As with both the NTAS and the HSAS by the end, the issuance of a threat level is also accompanied by security measures differentiated by geographical location, so that, “obviously there would be a different posture in an unmanned TA centre, than there would be in a highly sensitive establishment.” (Thomson-Smith, 2011, interview).<sup>113</sup> On the surface, then, the UK threat level system does not appear to condone an ‘everywhere’ conception of the terrorist threat.



**Figure 42: The UK threat level system (MI-5, 2012)**

As with the example of the HSAS, the UK government has been heavily reliant upon the media to communicate both general information about the system and the latest alert. Attesting to the communicability of the HSAS’ aesthetic (Chapter 5), the British broadcaster, Sky News, mirrored the American system’s design when reporting on the new UK system. In early 2010, it added colours to a report on the latter, using exactly the same scheme as the HSAS (Couzens, 2010). Whilst initially the UK government shied away from using colours, by 2012 colours were part of MI-5’s system guidance, too (MI-5, 2012); identical to the HSAS scheme, except that orange

<sup>113</sup> For the press releases accompanying the new system’s threat level warnings, see MI-5 (2007), MI-5 (2009), MI-5 (2010), MI-5 (ndb), UK Home Office (2011b). It is also known that MI-5 sets the level for Irish-related terrorism and the Joint Terrorism Analysis Centre for international terrorism (UK Home Office, 2011b), which aligns to their respective operational jurisdictions.

was replaced by pink (Figure 42). Given the excoriation of the HSAS' colour scheme by the American media and public safety communities, it is perhaps surprising that the UK should choose to add this visual quality to their own system (Kirby, 2013). Its cartographical representation by MI-5 highlights, too, the geographical limitations of using colour to understand the threat of terrorism in this fashion (Kirby, 2013). In a colour-coded map accompanying MI-5's system guidance, the yellow of a 'substantial' alert is seen to permeate the entire country, including the remotest Scottish Islands and Highlands: unlikely terrorist targets (Kirby, 2013). It is perhaps strange that in the UK, where the latest threat level system's predecessor, BIKINI, was used to target specific places, and where the new system itself appeared to differentiate the terrorist threat geographically (see above), they have now resorted to an 'everywhere' approach to terror warnings, just as the HSAS initially did.

The UK is not the only country to have replicated the HSAS in this way. In France, a terrorist threat alert system, Plan Vigipirate, has been in existence since 1978, although it was not officially and finally approved until 1981 (Schehr, 2008). Its direct inspiration was a succession of terrorist attacks in Europe at that time, including those perpetrated by the revolutionary communist groups, Action Directe and the Red Brigades (Prévention des Risques Majeurs, 2012), as well as the attack on French El Al passengers in the departure lounge of Paris-Orly airport in May, 1978 (Lewis, 1978). Indeed, the system's name, a portmanteau of 'vigilance' and 'pirate', pertains to the French colloquialism, 'pirate de l'air' – an informal French term for the hijacker of aeroplanes – which supports the suggestion that attacks on the air industry spurred its creation. Like BIKINI, Vigipirate was revised with the advent of the war on terror; in response to both the somatic marker of 9/11 and the coalition invasion of Iraq in 2003 (Gallis, 2006; Lansford, Pauly and Covarrubias, 2006). The system's latest incarnation includes a classification system directly akin to the HSAS, with four levels of increasing alert. Although there is no evidence that it was directly inspired by the American system, colours were introduced into Plan Vigipirate shortly after the HSAS had been implemented and conform to that system, too.

The exact threshold required for the change of Plan Vigipirate's alert colour is classified (Lansford, Pauly and Covarrubias, 2006), but we do know that the level changed to Code Red in reaction to the terrorist bombings of Madrid in 2004 and London in 2005 (Schehr, 2008). Most recently, Plan Vigipirate was raised to 'scarlet' after the shootings in south-west France by self-proclaimed al-Qaeda follower, Mohammed Merah; the first time it has ever reached its highest level (BBC News, 2012). The authority for activating Plan Vigipirate and changing its levels lies with the French government and, typically, a change can mean the additional call-up of some

35,000 designated martial personnel, including 4,000 especially assigned to protect the Parisian subway system (Gallis, 2006). An elevation might also precipitate increased surveillance of certain, public places; the cancellation of large-scale public gatherings; and the deployment of military personnel to protect key infrastructure (Gallis, 2006; Prévention des Risques Majeurs, 2012). Thus, Vigipirate exhibits similar security effects, across a range of different scales and geographies, as the HSAS did. Like the American System, the default level for Plan Vigipirate is continually elevated, too. In 2010, during a period of no terrorist activity, the official website of the French civil service, one of the few government pages to address the system, stated that, “The Minister of the Interior, Foreign Minister and local authorities have stated that France is currently at the “red” level of alert” (Service Public, 2010).<sup>114</sup>

As with the HSAS, Vigipirate has been accused of making implicitly racist assumptions, too. For Lawrence Schehr (2008: 435), in the only academic treatment of the system, “Vigipirate protects the French... provided they are, or would appear to be, white French people of French descent.” Whilst Schehr (2008) does not substantiate these comments, certainly it appears that many of Vigipirate’s recent alert changes have been triggered by the threat of Islamist terrorism, such as the Madrid and London bombings mentioned previously, rather than those by any other groups. Indeed, even alterations of Vigipirate not directly related to the threat of Islamic terrorism, such as that during the French civil unrest of 2005, can be connected to particular perceptions of non-white, Muslim bodies, as this particular period of disorder was stoked by underlying tensions regarding Muslim immigration to France. Like the HSAS, and indeed the UK system, Vigipirate’s determination process and alerts cannot be divorced from assumptions about particular bodies, their relative levels of ‘threat’ to the nation, and the security measures that should be enacted accordingly. We might recall again, as such, Puar and Rai’s (2002: 122) assertion that, “Counterterrorism is a form of racial, civilizational knowledge”.

The racial politics of terror warnings have been central to the introduction of Russia’s recent terror alert system, too; the last of the examples to be discussed here. Again, with its graduated colour codes, Russia’s system is a clear adaptation of the HSAS (Russia weighs, 2011). Possessing three levels – blue (‘elevated’), yellow (‘high’) and red (‘critical’) (RT, 2011), which perhaps reflects the triumvirate that the HSAS continually deviated between – Russia’s system was signed into law by President

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<sup>114</sup> (Le ministère de l’intérieur, de l’outre-mer et des collectivités territoriales rappelle que la France est actuellement au niveau d’alerte “rouge”). All translations from this source are courtesy of Jo Cagney.



Medvedev on May 3, 2011 (Kremlin, 2011); just days after the HSAS had been superseded by the NTAS. Although few details have yet emerged regarding precisely what each level entails – indeed, they may remain classified indefinitely – it is known that the president has the sole authority for determining the threat level and need not consult other members of the cabinet, as was necessary for the HSAS (RT, 2011). This reflects, perhaps, the more dictatorial structure of governance in the former Soviet Republic. Again, though, we might ask why a country has decided to mirror the HSAS after the well-publicised and widespread criticism of the latter. In the case of Russia, we might also ask what political benefits their new terror alert system has given the government in the context of the war on terror.

Such political benefits, and their entwinement with issues of race, are demonstrated by the creation process of the Russian system itself. Russia's system was explicitly created in response to the terrorist bombing at Moscow's Domodedovo Airport by an Islamist extremist, presumably of Chechen origin (Barry, 2011; RT, 2011). Russia has shown a proclivity to follow in the slipstream of the US' war on terror, cracking down on Chechen rebels under the rubric of Bush's self-styled conflict and using this as a justification for draconian security measures (Shuster, 2011). Indeed, this has arguably been made easier by the recent Boston attacks, perpetrated by Chechen emigrants to the US: the Tsarnaev brothers. In this way, it seems logical to see Russia's adoption of its own alert system as partly another rhetorical tool to subsume the killing of Chechens into the war on terror; a task made inordinately easier by the Boston attacks. As with American, British and French equivalents, Russia's system enshrines the connection between a particular ethnicity (again Islamic) and the threat of terrorism, but hides this behind the smokescreen of an apparently objective threat schemata. Some of the more nefarious aspects of the HSAS, then, have not only survived its own demise, but are propagating in other global locations.

#### **8.4 The HSAS and the microgeographies of homeland security**

This thesis began with a consideration of Martin Lewis and Karen Wigen's book, *The myth of continents: a critique of metageography*. Since then, I have attempted to demonstrate and discuss some of the ways in which the HSAS can be used to refine such metageographies as they pertain to homeland security and the System itself. This final section begins by borrowing again from their work. Lewis and Wigen (1997) finish their account by offering possible alternatives to the continental delimitations currently in use; in the belief that as well as being critical, human geography should also attempt to make more normative comments. In other words, it should not just criticise, but make its own recommendations, too. In the same year, Graham (1997:

29) made a similar suggestion, appealing for human geographers to consider the “normative element” of their research. Given that this thesis has approached the HSAS critically throughout, it seems appropriate to give an at least brief statement that addresses the question of whether the US needs a terror alert system at all. Indeed, does any country? After this, this final section offers a set of thesis conclusions emerging from the discussion of the previous chapters.

After considering the challenges faced by the HSAS, the answer to the question of whether terror alert systems are required, at least in the American context, would appear to be ‘no’. Although the HSAS was created with the best of intentions (Paul and Park, 2009), as Chapter 4 attests, it ultimately became a failure by many measures. In the fractious aftermath of 9/11, the System’s implementation was perhaps understandable in that it gave Americans at least the appearance that the government was in control of the terrorist threat; a threat that, at the time, was unpredictable in both its severity and longevity and that the OHS themselves were struggling to communicate effectively (Fenzel, 2011, interview). But the uses and abuses of the HSAS, as this thesis has explored, undermined the credibility of the System swiftly and definitively. Moreover, the System was undercut from the start by the conundrums elaborated upon in Chapter 5. The only conditions and security logics under which the HSAS could have been successful were if it issued a terror alert and, subsequently, a terrorist attack was publicly thwarted. In such a case – and perhaps only such a case – the alert would have been justified and the outcome desirable. But this never happened. Indeed, given that the issuance of a terror alert would have notified a potential terrorist that the authorities were aware of their plans – presumably the last thing that authorities would wish to do – it may never have been possible without endangering the safety of the homeland that it was attempting to protect.

The fact that the HSAS existed at all, though, has ensured that the DHS, even under a new political administration, has been forced to retain some form of terror alert system, for the political reasons discussed in both the previous chapter and above. It will be a brave administration that completely abandons a national terror alert system, especially in the aftermath of the recent terrorist attacks in Boston (Kirby, 2013). Indeed, as the examples of the NTAS’ politicisation attest, this aspect of homeland security history is marked as much by its circularity, in many ways, as its linearity. But as for the HSAS itself, its efficacy today perhaps lies more in its role as a vehicle through which to approach a period in history that may well continue to dominate the geopolitical architecture for many years to come, rather than as a prototypical warning system that ever held much use for public or private actors. In

this role, I think that it remains useful and intersects with many of the most controversial and significant aspects of the Bush presidency; including the implicit racial assumptions of the war on terror and the uses and abuses of President Bush's putative 'politics of fear' (Chapters 6 and 7), as well as the other themes that have been discussed throughout this thesis. As well, it can be used to reflect upon many of the theoretical interventions regarding homeland security within human geography and further afield, which the remainder of this section addresses.

The HSAS' development was, as we have seen, partially predicated upon the US' history of civil defence efforts, which included the introduction of colour-coded attack warning systems in the 1950s (Civil defence, 1952). It is important, though, not to overestimate the importance of these. Whilst systems such as DEFCON and Smokey Bear may have partially influenced the System's development, as the System's creators attest (Byrne, 2012, interview; Fenzel, 2011, interview), it is an oversimplification to suggest that homeland security is merely a reiteration of civil defence practices (Davis, 2007). The creation of the HSAS was also dependent upon interpersonal communication in that John Fenzel, the System's creator, recognised and responded to the confusion etched across Secretary Tom Ridge's face; confusion that stemmed from the fact that Ridge was unable to adequately convey a threat message to the American public (Fenzel, 2011, interview). Despite suggestions that the HSAS was originally created purely for the political benefit of President Bush (Massumi, 2005), then, the picture is actually more clouded. Moreover, we might note how the often difficult and convoluted process of the System's creation, as revealed here through interviews with its creators, challenges the notion that homeland security can be understood as a smooth process understandable only through its polished official reports and other documentation (Martin and Simon, 2008). Rather, it is useful to offer more populated accounts of state policies, such as the HSAS; a theoretical claim that is considered in greater depth below.

Martin and Simon's (2008) notion of smoothly expedited homeland security policy was challenged, too, as the HSAS' homeland security imperatives broke down and failed in the years that followed its implementation. After its enactment across the US, the System's 'everywhere' conception of the war on terror (Gregory, 2011) was challenged by state and local governments, amongst others, for whom the System was simply not as precise and targeted as it needed to be; an imprecision felt particularly keenly in the budgets of these same governments. Despite an elaborate apparatus of both human and non-human actors that facilitated the communication of the latest threat alert level across the country, the HSAS flouted one of the central tenets of risk communication: the ability for warnings to be easily understood and acted upon by

those in receipt of them (Jenkins and Sebastian, 2004a; and see Chapter 4). In response to these concerns, congressional oversight authorities including the CRS and the GAO issued reports that urged the System's further development (Reese, 2003; Jenkins and Sebastian, 2004a), and congressional hearings were also held to try and improve the HSAS' functionality (*Hearing* [Selection Committee], 2004; *Hearing* [Subcommittee], 2004). Together, these resulted in the issuance of the System's first geographically specific warning in the latter half of 2004; the first of three warnings that would target particular areas rather than the entire country. Heavy criticism of the System by state and local officials, though, coupled with the arrival of Michael Chertoff – a DHS Secretary less enamoured with the HSAS than Ridge had been – meant that the System was soon unofficially retired. Thus, claims that, “The implication of the DHS and its alerts is that threats to security are themselves inherently national in scope” (Hannah, 2006: 630), or, in Farish's (2008: 99) terms, “cleverly nonspecific”, capture only a partial truth. At first, the System did embrace an ‘everywhere’ conception of the terrorist threat, but this evolved over time.

Contributing to the System's downfall was the satirical derision that it attracted, too. From the start, the HSAS was the punchline for jokes made by late night comedy hosts, such as Jon Stewart (Brigham, 2005). Later, humour about the System broadened, as online satirists began to alter the HSAS' aesthetic and security imperatives to maximise its comedic value (Behkne, 2012). Whilst the HSAS' visual representation of the terrorist threat often came to the fore in these examples, it was the particular effect that this representation had on people that was important. The purpose of these satirical adaptations and commentaries of the HSAS was not to exist free-floating and devoid of contact with an audience, as critiques of representational approaches to geopolitics attest, but to stimulate laughter. At the same time, the power of political humour can be overrated and, despite such satire, the System endured for many more years. The comedy value of the HSAS, though, was mentioned by Janet Napolitano as one of the reasons justifying her reappraisal of the System, suggesting that it had at least some utility in devaluing the HSAS to the point where its replacement, rather than refurbishment, was deemed necessary (Solomon, 2009). Satirical accounts of the HSAS also demonstrate how the theorisation of homeland security needs to consider not just official accounts, but the contestation of official government metanarratives and policy pronouncements, too; as per the remit of popular geopolitics (Sharp, 2000a).

With reference to the geopolitics of humour, a nascent area of concern within popular geopolitics, we might also make several points about this episode in the HSAS' history. First, it demonstrates the limitations of the notion proffered by Brunn (2004)

that, in the aftermath of 9/11, humour in the US was effectively suspended, especially through popular channels. The dynamics of humour shifted at this time, perhaps, in that the HSAS was a less sensitive target than the events of 9/11 themselves, but humour at the expense of President Bush and the war on terror more broadly, endured; in this case, through the satirical targeting of one of the most visible policies of homeland security. Second, we might use the case study of the HSAS to indicate the limitations of the notion that humour is necessarily able to effect significant political change. Whilst it is difficult to quantify the effect that HSAS humour had on the American opinion of the System, broadly construed, we do know that the HSAS endured for nine years after its initial satirical criticism by Jon Stewart. As Davies (2007) contends, we should be circumspect with reference to the political power of humour and other artistic endeavours, which can sometimes reinforce rather than contest security logics, including those of the war on terror (Lisle, 2007). Humour can provide citizens with a tool to engage with political decisions and their societal impact, as scholars of satirical geopolitics have attested (see Purcell, Brown and Gokmen, 2010; Ridanpää, 2009), but the utility of this tool is less clear.

A final blow to the HSAS, and perhaps the most substantial, came courtesy of accusations in 2004 that the System had been elevated for political gain, rather than the public good; based upon the work of Robb Willer (2004). Whilst it may not be possible to ever state unequivocally whether the HSAS was manipulated in this particular fashion or not, the evidence points toward the fact that political calculation of some description was involved in determining certain alerts. What is important to reflect upon, too, are the mechanics of the HSAS' affectivity. It seems plausible that colour, given its ability to affect and precipitate emotion beneath the radar of conscious awareness, was part of the reason that the HSAS affected certain members of the American population in the way that it did; especially given the association of particular colours with threat and danger (such as red), and others with safety (such as blue). Tacit knowledges, such as the Republicans' perceived strength on national security issues and Bush's status as Commander-in-Chief during a time of war, amongst others, may also have resonated with such qualities; strengthening the influence of the HSAS upon some and, as Willer (2004) suggests, apparently increasing the propensity of certain people to support President Bush. As with accounts of the System's creation, governance and satirical denunciation, though, it is important to note that different people reacted in different ways. In contrast to Brian Massumi's (2005) metageography of a single homogenous population affected in unison by the HSAS, the System had differing effects upon differing people according to arbitrary characteristics that, in some cases, apparently included race and gender (Eisenman et al., 2009).

Indeed, the varied effect of the terrorist threat and the HSAS upon people is demonstrated, too, by populated accounts of those in charge of the System. For some, such as Tom Ridge, there were concerns that the System might sow fear, which could then be politically manipulated; for others, such as Fran Townsend, there were worries that the System might cause confusion; for still others, such as Donald Rumsfeld, it was believed that the HSAS was an appropriate way to warn citizens and, perhaps, instil resilience. Central to this, too, were the differences in how these actors were affected by their perception of the terrorist threat and certain incidents such as the release of the Adam Gadahn videotape in 2004. Rumsfeld appears to have taken the threat outlined in this videotape extremely seriously, whilst the same threat was dismissed by others. Again, the extent to which political self-protection enters these debates is difficult to determine, but we might say, at least, that the affectivity of the HSAS and the terrorist threat was construed in quite different ways by a variety of actors during these debates; an eclecticism that makes reducing an account of the HSAS' affectivity to only a consideration of accusations that it was altered for electoral gain simplistic.

In 2009, official review processes were employed to create the political space that enabled the System's ultimate dissolution (DHS, 2009d), just as they had accompanied the early years of the HSAS story. But whilst the criticisms of the HSAS by the GAO, the CRS and Congress in 2003 and 2004 had not been welcomed by the DHS, those of the HSAS Task Force were greeted much more warmly. Secretary Napolitano demonstrated a deft touch in arranging the Task Force so that it could be used to support her desired outcome of repealing the System, but even the disagreements within this body demonstrate the futility of attempting to understand the enactment of homeland security as a smooth process. Unlike Tom Ridge, Napolitano attempted to control NTAS humour from the very start, too; perhaps recalling the opprobrium that the HSAS had incurred in this regard. Despite this care and attention, though, the new system appears to have been politicised like its predecessor; albeit in a slightly different manner. Representatives of the GOP and conservative commentators have claimed, in the wake of both Osama bin Laden's assassination and the Boston Marathon bombings, that rather than it being elevated too often (accusations that dogged the HSAS), the NTAS has not been altered enough (Morgan, 2011; Hallowell, 2013). Elsewhere, the legacy of the HSAS has perhaps been more successful, with the UK, France and Russia all introducing systems based upon the HSAS, but these, too, have been shot through with issues that plagued the HSAS; most notably their assumptions about race and ethnicity. The problems that characterised the HSAS' early years remain, albeit in different forms and different

places; and attest to the fact that homeland security, whichever country it is employed within, is frequently enmeshed with questions of inequality regarding race and gender (Puar, 2006; Puar and Rai, 2002).

I would also like to reflect more explicitly here upon the theme that has run throughout this thesis: the notion that metageographies of the war on terror, homeland security and the HSAS should be avoided, or at least nuanced. The brief overview of this thesis above has introduced some of these ideas and it is the suggestion here that the notion of microgeographies, rather than metageographies, might better enable us to think through issues of homeland security and the HSAS, in particular. To start, and in line with Anderson and Adey (2011: 1107), we might note how the exercise of homeland security, in the case of the HSAS, has been expedited through social interactions at the individual level and “security affects, such as confusion or fun”. Both the creation of the System (Chapter 4), and the processes of its ultimate dissolution (this chapter), for example, have demonstrated the importance of this interpersonal communication; in contrast to what Anderson and Adey (2011) have called the epochal metanarratives of homeland security and the war on terror, such as Ulrich Beck’s (2002) notion of ‘risk society’. In this sense, I have tried to adhere to Merje Kuus’ (2007, 2008, 2013) call throughout this thesis, which is that more ‘peopled’ accounts of geopolitical elites better show how government security practices are actually undertaken. Within this, I have also tried to stress that Republican officials, particularly those of the Bush era, might be more usefully engaged with as people that, at least in certain cases, made decisions with the best of intentions and to the best of their ability. Such nuance is arguably missed by conceptions of this same ‘group’ as a “cabal of restless nationalists” (Ó Tuathail, 2003: 857), or the like. At the same time, as discussed in Chapter 3, it is methodologically important to recognise any researcher’s positionality when interviewing elites. Whilst there is much to be gained, it is important to emplace individuals within the wider structures of power that they operate within; to avoid offering a depoliticised account of homeland security, or, indeed, any other state practice.

In addition to embracing the multifariousness of political elites, this thesis has also attempted to refine conceptions of how non-government, more ‘everyday’ actors responded to the HSAS. Given limitations upon the research, it has not been possible to conduct extensive surveys in order to gauge the opinions of persons across the US. But there are other ways that it is possible to offer a more nuanced conception of ‘populations’ with respect to the System. Brian Massumi (2005) has suggested that the HSAS affected people across geographical and social divides, but the work of

Eisenman et al. (2009), which considers how race and gender affects the HSAS' influence, implies that this is not necessarily true. Similarly, resistance to official metanarratives of the HSAS was undertaken by satirists across the Internet and elsewhere, which demonstrates some of the ways that more everyday actors interpreted and responded to the System. They show, in other words, that there was no single population uniformly affected by the HSAS in a particular manner. Indeed, in line with recent non-representational theories, we might broaden the notion of agency with regard to the HSAS even further. Material cultures and virtual representations, in the form of posters, screens and videotapes (see Meehan et al., 2013), and not just human actors, have also been an important part of the HSAS story.

In this way, recent accounts of 'peopled' geopolitics (Kuus, 2007; 2008; 2013) offer an important rejoinder to analyses of world politics and international relations that have often focussed upon, for example, the geographical scales of the organisation and the state. As Chapter 2 describes, a focus upon individuals need not necessarily obfuscate consideration of the wider systems of governance in which individuals are necessarily implicated. Rather, they can be used to nuance our understandings of the power of states and state organisations, such as the DHS. Following accounts such as Painter's (2000) and Müller's (2011), the role of individuals within wider bureaucracies might be seen as defined partially by individual agency, but also by the broader set of relations of these people. In the case of the HSAS, particular individual moments expedited its creation, such as John Fenzel's original idea for the System itself at a press conference, but these can also be emplaced within other relations, such as Fenzel's personal relationship with Tom Ridge and the populated bureaucratic apparatuses that became important once the latter had charged Fenzel with creating a public warning system.

Finally, I would like to finish this thesis by reiterating the importance of geography. Conceptions of the war on terror as an 'everywhere war' (Gregory, 2011), rather than contesting the simplified notions of certain elites such as George W. Bush (Coe et al., 2004; Corn, 2003), arguably reproduce the same reductionist logics. In the case of the System, this 'everywhere' hypothesis has revealed itself through notions that the HSAS was "national in scope" (Hannah, 2006: 630), and "cleverly nonspecific" (Farish, 2008: 99) (see above). As this thesis has discussed, initially the HSAS was generic in this manner. But such accounts, despite being written after the long process of the HSAS' various reviews and the advent of its geographically specific alerts (Chapter 5), ignore this same history. The HSAS was certainly not perfect and was entwined with many of the most controversial aspects of the George W. Bush



administration, as this thesis has attempted to describe. At the same time, however, I think that we do an at least partial disservice to both the people that attempted to make it work, and the history of the System itself, by attempting to apply such metageographies to its analysis. Homeland security is an ongoing process undertaken by a multitude of people, many of whom are trying to do the best job that they can, but which is still marked by its failures, slippages and contestations.

## 9. Appendix

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### 9.1 Timeline of the HSAS

Jan. 20, 2001	Governor George W. Bush (R-TX) is sworn in as the 43 <sup>rd</sup> President of the United States
Sep. 11, 2001	The United States is struck by four co-ordinated suicide attacks in which 2, 977 people are killed. An Islamist terrorist group, al Qaeda, are soon assigned (and later claim) responsibility
Sep. 20, 2001	In a special Joint Session of Congress, President Bush announces the creation of a new Office of Homeland Security, to be led by Governor Tom Ridge (R-PA)
Oct. 5, 2001	Tom Ridge is formally appointed the first United States Homeland Security Advisor
Oct. 7, 2001	The United States and the United Kingdom attack Afghanistan, whose leaders, the Taliban, have been providing safe haven for al Qaeda
Oct. 8, 2001	President Bush signs Executive Order 13228 (2001), which establishes the Office of Homeland Security and the Homeland Security Council
Oct. 26, 2001	The USA PATRIOT Act is signed into law by President Bush. Russ Feingold (D-WI) is the only senator to dissent
Dec. 3, 2001	Lieutenant Colonel John Fenzel, after consultation with Tom Ridge, is tasked with creating an alert system to communicate the threat of terrorist attacks
Mar. 11, 2002	President Bush signs Homeland Security Presidential Directive-3, which creates the Homeland Security Advisory System. The System's initial threat level is set at Yellow

Mar. 12, 2002	The HSAS is formally introduced by Tom Ridge at a press conference in Constitution Hall, Washington, DC. The System is immediately met with satirical decision by commentators such as Jon Stewart
Mar. 19, 2002	President Bush signs Executive Order 13260 (2002), which establishes the Homeland Security Advisory Council
Sep. 10, 2002	The HSAS threat level is changed for the first time and raised from Yellow to Orange after intelligence suggests al Qaeda are planning an attack on the anniversary of 9/11
Sep. 24, 2002	The HSAS threat level is lowered from Orange to Yellow after a review of intelligence and the anniversary of 9/11 passes without incident
Nov. 25, 2002	President Bush signs the Homeland Security Act of 2002, which establishes the Department of Homeland Security. It will soon come to be the third largest federal department, after the Departments of Defense and Veterans Affairs
Jan. 4, 2003	Tom Ridge becomes the first Secretary of Homeland Security
Feb. 5, 2003	Secretary of State Colin Powell addresses the United Nations and claims that Iraq is in possession of weapons of mass destruction
Feb. 7, 2003	The HSAS threat level is raised from Yellow to Orange after intelligence is received that al Qaeda are planning an attack
Feb. 27, 2003	The HSAS threat level is lowered from Orange to Yellow after a review of intelligence and the end of the Hajj: the Muslim pilgrimage to Mecca, Saudi Arabia
Mar. 17, 2003	The HSAS threat level is raised from Yellow to Orange as intelligence estimates suggest al Qaeda may attempt to retaliate for the impending United States-led attack on Iraq

Mar. 20, 2003	The United States-led coalition invades Iraq
Apr. 16, 2003	The HSAS threat level is lowered from Orange to Yellow after a review of intelligence
May 20, 2003	The HSAS threat level is raised from Yellow to Orange after terrorist bombings in Saudi Arabia and Morocco
May 30, 2003	The HSAS threat level is lowered from Orange to Yellow after a review of intelligence and the passing of the Memorial Day federal holiday
Aug. 6, 2003	The Congressional Research Service releases its report “Homeland Security Advisory System: possible issues for congressional oversight”, authored by Shawn Reese
Dec. 21, 2003	The HSAS threat level is raised from Yellow to Orange after unspecified intelligence reports are received
Jan. 9, 2004	The HSAS threat level is lowered from Orange to Yellow after a review of intelligence and the passing of numerous holidays and large gatherings around the Christmas period
Feb. 4, 2004	The United States Congress House Select Committee on Homeland Security convenes to discuss the HSAS
Mar. 16, 2004	The United States Congress House Committee on Oversight and Government Reform, Subcommittee on National Security, Emerging Threats, and International Relations convenes to discuss the HSAS
Jun. 25, 2004	The General Accounting Office releases its report “Homeland security: communication protocols and risk communication principles can assist in refining the Advisory System”, authored by William Jenkins and Debra Sebastian
Aug. 1, 2004	The HSAS threat level is raised from Yellow to Orange, but only for the financial services sectors of New York City, Northern New Jersey, and Washington, DC after specific

	intelligence is received. This is the first ever sector-specific warning
Sep. 30, 2004	Robb Willer's academic paper, "The effects of government-issued terror warnings on presidential approval ratings", is published, and is soon given widespread media coverage
Oct. 20, 2004	In an interview with <i>Rolling Stone</i> , Massachusetts Senator John Kerry (D-MASS) declines to comment on accusations that the HSAS is being used for political purposes
Oct. 30, 2004	Unbeknownst to the public at the time, Secretary Ridge engages in a heated debate with other members of the Homeland Security Council about whether the HSAS level should be raised nationally. Secretary Ridge and his supporters ultimately prevail, arguing that it should not
Nov. 4, 2004	President Bush beats John Kerry to win re-election to the presidency for a second term
Nov. 10, 2004	The HSAS threat level is lowered from Orange to Yellow for the financial services sectors of New York City, Northern New Jersey and Washington, DC
Nov. 30, 2004	Secretary Ridge announces that he is to resign from his office. He later claims this decision was triggered by pressure to raise the HSAS level from certain members of the Homeland Security Council
Feb. 1, 2005	Deputy Secretary, James Loy, becomes acting Secretary of Homeland Security whilst a replacement for Tom Ridge is sought
Feb. 15, 2005	United States Court of Appeals Judge Michael Chertoff becomes the second Secretary of Homeland Security
Jul. 7, 2005	The HSAS threat level is raised from Yellow to Orange, but only for the mass transit sector, after the 7/7 transport attacks in London in which 52 people are killed

Aug. 12, 2005	The HSAS threat level is lowered from Orange to Yellow for the mass transit sector after greater security measures have been implemented at the federal, state and local level
Aug. 10, 2006	The HSAS threat level is raised from Yellow to Red for flights bound for the United States from the United Kingdom. This is the only time that the System has ever moved two levels at once
Aug. 13, 2006	The HSAS threat level is lowered from Red to Orange for flights bound for the United States from the United Kingdom and is set at Orange for all other flights, as well. This is the last change
Jan. 20, 2009	Senator Barack Obama (D-IL) is sworn in as the 44 <sup>th</sup> President of the United States
Jan. 21, 2009	Governor Janet Napolitano (D-AZ) becomes the third Secretary of Homeland Security
Jul. 14, 2009	Secretary Napolitano announces a 60-day review of the HSAS and appoints a Homeland Security Advisory System Task Force to carry this out
Sep. 1, 2009	Tom Ridge publishes his memoirs, <i>The Test of Our Times</i> , in which he suggests political motives influenced the determination of the HSAS threat level. Ridge's accusations are forcefully denied by Fran Townsend, President Bush's third Homeland Security Advisor, and Donald Rumsfeld, former Secretary of Defense
Sep. 15, 2009	The Homeland Security Advisory System Task Force releases their report, in which a raft of changes to the present system is suggested
Jan. 27, 2011	Secretary Napolitano announces that the HSAS is to be phased out

Apr. 27, 2011                      The HSAS is discontinued and the National Terrorism Advisory System, its replacement, comes into effect. The new system has two levels, no colours, and is designed to be more geographically specific than its predecessor. As of writing, it has yet to be used

## **9.2 Profiles of interviewees**

Ali, Kasim                              (Associate Professor of Creative Writing and Comparative Literature): Kasim Ali lectures at Oberlin College, Ohio, and is the author of the book, *Orange alert: Essays on poetry, art and the architecture of silence*. Conducted by telephone to New York: May 30, 2012

Anonymous                            (Homeland Security Official): Anonymous declined to be identified for the purposes of this research, but is an official within the field of homeland security, with professional knowledge of the HSAS. Conducted by telephone to the United States: Mar. 17, 2011

Beardsworth, Randy                (Former Under-Secretary for the Border and Transportation Security Directorate, DHS): Randy Beardsworth served on the HSAS Task Force, which reviewed the System for Secretary Janet Napolitano. Conducted in person in Washington, DC: May 10, 2012

Behunin, Scott                        (Regional Director at the Office of Infrastructure Protection, DHS): Scott Behunin is a former Director of Utah's Emergency Service and Homeland Security Division, and wrote his master's thesis on the HSAS. Conducted by telephone to Washington State: May 29, 2012

Benjamin, Medea                    (Co-Founder of Code Pink): Medea Benjamin is a political activist and the co-founder of Code Pink; a women-led anti-war group, whose name and creation were inspired by the HSAS. Conducted by telephone to Washington, DC: May 1, 2012

Brigham, John (Professor of Political Science): John Brigham lectures at the University of Massachusetts, and is the author of the academic paper, “Anti-anti terror: Color coding and the joke of “homeland security””. Conducted by telephone to Massachusetts: Jul. 1, 2011

Byrne, Mike (National Incident Management Assistance Team Leader, FEMA): Mike Byrne was one of the lead designers of the HSAS, one of the first recruits to the OHS, and was responsible for adding colours to the System. Conducted by telephone to Washington, DC: May 21, 2012

Campbell, Duncan (Former Chief of Staff to Secretary Tom Ridge, DHS): Duncan Campbell is the Managing Director of Operations at Ridge Global, a consultancy specialising in risk management, founded by Tom Ridge. Conducted in person in Washington, DC: Jun. 7, 2012

Capps, Alan (Former Research Analyst, National Defense University): Alan Capps is currently working on the history of the United States border patrol at George Mason University, and previously edited the Journal of Defense and Diplomacy. Conducted by telephone to Virginia: May 23, 2012

Carafano, James (Expert, The Heritage Foundation): James Carafano commentated regularly on the HSAS, and testified on the System before the House Subcommittee on National Security, Emerging Threats, and International Threats. Conducted by telephone to Washington, DC: Jun. 28, 2011

Cooper, Rich (Former Business Liaison Director for the Private Sector Office, DHS): Rich Cooper helped develop the HSAS in its early years, focussing particularly on its reception and comprehension by the private sector. Conducted in person in Washington, DC: Apr. 20, 2012

Ervin, Clark (Director of the Aspen Institute Homeland Security Program): Clark Ervin was the first Inspector General of the Department of Homeland Security and served on the HSAS



Task Force, which reviewed the System for Secretary Janet Napolitano. Conducted by telephone to Washington, DC: May 22, 2012

- Fenzel, John (Principal Architect of the HSAS): Lieutenant Colonel John Fenzel is a former White House Fellow and Staff Director for Secretary Tom Ridge in the Homeland Security Council. In late 2001, he led the initial development of the HSAS. Conducted by telephone to Washington, DC: Jun. 24, 2011
- Flynn, Stephen (President of the Center for National Policy): Stephen Flynn is the author of the article, “Color me scared” (*The New York Times*). He is also a former study group member of the (‘Hart-Rudman’) Commission on National Security/ 21<sup>st</sup> Century. Conducted by telephone to New York: May 14, 2012
- Franceschini, Amy (Artist and Teacher): Amy Franceschini is the creator and exhibitor of the Homeland Security blanket; an artistic sculpture designed to change temperature according to the level of the HSAS, exhibited by the Museum of Modern Art, New York. Conducted by telephone to California: Jul. 7, 2011
- Frank, Ze (Online Performance Artist, Composer, Humorist and Public Speaker): Ze Frank is the creator of “Red Alert”; a satirical film critiquing homeland security and the HSAS, which premiered at the New York film festival, Bay 60. Conducted by telephone to New York: Jul. 7, 2011
- Jenkins, William (Director of Homeland Security and Justice Issues, Government Accountability Office): William Jenkins is the co-author, with Debra Sebastian, of the Government Accountability Office’s report on the HSAS. Conducted in person in Washington, DC: May 24, 2012
- Kondracke, Morton (Political Journalist): Morton Kondracke was a regular panellist on the current affairs television show, *The McLaughlin Group*, and executive editor of *The New Republic*. He is currently a political commentator on Fox

News. Conducted in person in Washington, DC: May 25, 2012

- Lippman, Dave (Musician and Comedian): Dave Lippman is the writer and performer of the single “Color-coded alerts”; a satirical song and sketch that mocks the HSAS. He performs under the pseudonym, ‘Singing CIA Agent George Shrub’. Conducted by telephone to New Jersey: Jun. 28, 2011
- Lopez, Ken (Director of Security and Emergency Preparedness, Library of Congress): Ken Lopez was previously the Director of Security for the Immigration and Naturalization Service at the Department of Justice, and an intelligence officer. Conducted in person in Washington, DC: Jun. 1, 2012
- Loy, James (Former Acting Secretary of Homeland Security): Admiral James Loy was the second Deputy Secretary of Homeland Security, serving from 2003-2005, and Acting Secretary during the transition between Secretaries Ridge and Chertoff. Conducted by telephone to Washington, DC: Jun. 11, 2012
- Mower, Joan (Director of Development and International Media Training, Voice of America): Joan Mower lectures at Johns Hopkins University. She is also a former journalist, and worked at the State Department from 2007 to 2008. Conducted in person in Washington, DC: Mar. 29, 2012
- Mower, Richard (Republican Political Consultant): Richard Mower is a former Capitol Hill staffer, who has worked on the Senate Budget, Senate Banking, and Foreign Operations Committees. He is currently a policies and issues researcher for the Republican Party. Conducted in person in Virginia: May 28, 2012
- Peña, Charles (Senior Fellow, Independent Institute): Charles Peña is the former Director of Defense Policy Studies at the Cato Institute, and has written several commentaries on the HSAS

for that organisation. Conducted in person in Virginia: May 30, 2012

Piraro, Dan (Cartoonist): Dan Piraro is a syndicated cartoonist published globally, and the creator of the cartoon, 'Japanese Homeland Security Advisory System', which replaces the HSAS' five levels with famous Japanese movie monsters. Conducted by telephone to New York: Jul. 19, 2011

Raisch, William (Director of the International Center for Enterprise Preparedness): William Raisch helped convene meetings on the HSAS between the Department of Homeland Security and the private sector during the System's early years. Conducted by telephone to New York: May 2, 2012

Reese, Shawn (Analyst, Congressional Research Service): Shawn Reese is the author of multiple CRS reports on the HSAS, and has testified on the System before the House Government Reform Committee. Conducted by telephone to Washington, DC: Jun. 24, 2011; in person in Washington, DC: Apr. 19, 2012

Reker, Mary Lou (Special Assistant to the Director): Mary Lou Reker works in the Office of Scholarly Programs at the John W. Kluge Center, Library of Congress. She is also the Kluge representative to the Library's monthly emergency management meetings. Conducted in person in Washington, DC: May 18, 2012

Salmons, Michael (Chief of the Emergency Preparedness Division): Michael Salmons is an experienced security professional, and is responsible for mitigating risks to the Library of Congress, from natural disasters to terrorism. Conducted in person in Washington, DC: Jun. 1, 2012

Sebastian, Debra (Assistant Director of Homeland Security and Justice Issues, Government Accountability Office): Debra Sebastian is the co-author, with William Jenkins, of the Government

Accountability Office's report on the HSAS. Conducted in person in Washington, DC: May 24, 2012

Thomson-Smith, Craig (National Threat Advisor): Craig Thomson-Smith is a former Major in the British Army and works for the Ministry of Defence as a Counter-Intelligence Manager, with expert knowledge of the UK's terrorist threat alert system. Conducted in person in London: Jul. 4, 2011

Tibbets, Linden (Website Designer): Linden Tibbets is the creator of the only website dedicated solely to the HSAS, entitled "Red, orange, yellow, blue and green"; an interpretative-interface that tracked changes in the HSAS level over several years. Conducted by telephone to California: Jul. 7, 2011

Weil, Janet (Staff Member at Code Pink): Janet Weil manages external enquiries about Code Pink; a women-led anti-war group, whose name and creation were inspired by the HSAS. She is also the author of a satirical poem about the HSAS, 'Reclaiming orange'. Conducted by telephone to California: Jul. 3, 2011

Wermuth, Michael (Manager of Counterterrorism and Homeland Defense, RAND Corporation): Michael Wermuth is a former Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense, and testified on the HSAS before the House Government Reform Committee. Conducted by telephone to South Carolina: Apr. 26, 2012

Willer, Robb (Assistant Professor of Sociology): Robb Willer lectures at the University of California, and is the author of the academic paper, "The effects of government-issued terror warnings on presidential approval ratings". Conducted by telephone to California: Apr. 24, 2012, and May 15, 2012

Woo, Gordon (Catastrophe Risk Consultant): Gordon Woo models catastrophe at Risk Management Solutions; a company which specialises in quantifying various risks, from natural disasters to terrorism, for financial institutions. Conducted by telephone to London: Jun. 23, 2011

### 9.3 Coverage of the HSAS by Fox News and *The New York Times*

An analysis was conducted of all articles dedicated to the HSAS by Fox News and *The New York Times* within their online archives (available at <http://www.foxnews.com/> and <http://www.nytimes.com/ref/membercenter/nytarchive.html>, respectively). After trial and error, it was found that the search terms ‘Homeland Security Advisory System’, ‘terror alert’ and ‘color coded alert’ yielded the greatest number of appropriate returns, given that not all articles used the System’s official title. These returns were then sorted to avoid duplication and coded according to their opinion of the HSAS. Of Fox News’ 70 articles, 53% expressed no opinion, 4% positive opinion and 41% negative opinion.<sup>115</sup> Of *The New York Times*’ 121 articles, 49% expressed no opinion, 1% positive opinion and 50% negative opinion.<sup>116</sup> As such, there appears to have been little difference in the coverage of these two media outlets, despite the fact that Fox News appears to have a predilection for endorsing Republican policies, and *The New York Times* the opposite (New York Times endorsements, 2012).

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<sup>115</sup> Positive reports, Blanton (2003), Fox News (2002c, 2004c); negative reports, Associated Press (2003a, 2003c, 2003e, 2004b, 2004f, 2005a, 2005b, 2009a, 2009b, 2009c, 2010b, 2010c, 2011a, 2011b, 2011d, 2011e), Blanton (2002), Fox News (2004d, 2009b, 2011b), Miller (2011), Porteus (2003a, 2003b, 2003c), Shawn (2011), Vlahos (2003), Baker (2007), Fox News (2009a, 2011a); neutral reports, Associated Press (2002a, 2002b, 2002c, 2003b, 2003d, 2003f, 2003g, 2004a, 2004c, 2004d, 2004e, 2004, 2006, 2007, 2008, 2009d, 2010a, 2011c), Fox News (2002a, 2002b, 2003a, 2003b, 2003c, 2004a, 2004b, 2005a, 2005b, 2005c, 2006, 2009c, 2010a, 2010b, 2010c), Hayes (2005), Miller (2010), Scroope (2005), Sullivan (2008).

<sup>116</sup> Positive reports, Shenon (2002a); negative reports, “Better signs...” (2009), “Laugh lines...” (2005), “Three years...” (2004), “Wish passion...” (2003), “Wrestling...” (2009), Associated Press (2009d), Barron (2005), Barron and Connelly (2004), Barry (2011), Broder and Yardley (2002), Clemetson (2003), Elliot (2003), Lichtblau (2004), Lichtblau and Drew (2004), Lichtblau and Liptak (2003), Lipton (2005a, 2005b), Moynihan (2011), Otterman (2010), Purnick (2002), Rich (2005), Risen (2003), Risen and Johnston (2002), Scott (2004), Severson (2005), Sharkey (2003), Shenon (2002d, 2003b, 2003h, 2003k, 2003m, 2003n, 2003p), Solomon (2009), Stevenson and Johnson (2004), Talbot (2003), Tierney (2003), Toy (2005), Umansky (2003), Wyatt (2003); “The terror alerts” (2004), “The warning overdose” (2002), “We never...” (2011), Allis (2003), Bobbit (2004), Dowd (2002), Flynn (2005), Haberman (2002, 2007), James (2007, 2008), Johnston and Lichtblau (2004), Johnston and van Natta (2004), Martin (2002), Rich (2002), Rosen (2004), Schwartz (2002, 2010), Stevenson (2003), Tierney (2008), Vanderbilt (2003); neutral reports, “A nation...” (2003), “City warned...” (2003), “Move cautiously...” (2003), “Terror alert...” (2003), “Transcript...” (2002), Baker (2008), Bohlen (2002), Chartrand (2003), Chen (2003), Cohen (2010), Cowell (2005), Firestone and Mitchell (2002), Fountain (2007), Herszenhorn (2003), Janofsky (2003), Johnston (2004a, 2004b), Johnston and Broder (2002), Johnston and Janofsky (2005), Johnston and South (2004), Kahn (2004), Klein (2008), Knowlton (2003), Kugel (2007), Lichtblau (2003), Lipton and Weiser (2004), Longman (2008), Lyall (2003), MacFarquhar and van Natta (2003), Markoff (2004), Miller and Shenon (2002), Neuman (2004), Nunez (2006), Purdum (2004), Rampel (2010), Rich (2004), Risen and Johnston (2003), Sanger and Johnston (2002), Santora (2003), Saulny (2004), Shattuck (2009), Shenon (2002b, 2002c, 2003a, 2003c, 2003d, 2003e, 2003f, 2003g, 2003i, 2003j, 2003l, 2003o, 2004), Shenon and Lichtblau (2003), Shenon and Wilgoren (2003), Southall (2011), van Natta and Johnston (2002a, 2002b).

## 9.4 Transcripts of recorded interviews

### 9.4.1 Randy Beardsworth

RB: What do you think I can help you with? Do you have a set of questions? Or, how do you want to start the conversation?

PK: Yes, the first question would be, what has your involvement been? I mean, I notice your name is on the taskforce that reviewed the System, so maybe we could start with that?

RB: Yes, I'll give you a little bit of my background. I don't know, do you have my background?

PK: Only what the web can reveal. And what Rich Cooper can reveal.

RB: That's pretty good. So, I came into the Department in, with homeland security, as we were standing it up in 2002, the end of 2002, and of course the Department itself was created in January, 2003, the other agencies came into the Department on March 1 of 2003. I was in what was called the Border and Transportation Security Directorate as the Operations Officer, the acting Under Secretary. And then when we reorganized I went on to be the assistant secretary for strategic plans, so I was not there, I can't even tell you. What was the date that we created the advisory code, the advisory system?

PK: It was March, 12, 2002.

RB: So I wasn't engaged in the creation of it, I was simply a user and like everybody else was sort of driven by, or captured by, or limited by, the codes, so I think in the early days it was, it was I certainly perceived it as something that was a quick and dirty way, how do we differentiate the difference of the threats. And I don't think it was particularly well conceived, or particularly ill conceived, it was, we need to have some quick way to tell people what's the level of threat and so we use the color code, the visual representation of it, which was fairly simplistic. What happened quickly was this notion that what do you do if you change from yellow to orange, orange to red, what does that mean? And that's where I really got engaged, because in 2003 we were getting ready to go to Iraq, to invade Iraq and we knew that we would be changing the color-code and so what did that mean. And we had a couple of drills, sometimes it was used in reality. It certainly changed more frequently early than later. And what we found is that, and it took a surprisingly long period of time, that to figure out that you can't change the whole country from one level to another level. I presume we thought we could early on, well, we think this attack is coming so let's change levels, the fact of that matter was, as you started putting protocols in place, well, what does it mean for TSA to go to orange or red, what does it mean for the Coast Guard, what does it mean for CBP, and what does it mean for a state or a city or a municipality or the banking sector, or the energy sector to go from one colour to the other, you started driving planning based on the colour code and then people started developing budgets associated with what they needed to do to get to the next level and to be prepared... Over time you begin to create a bureaucracy around the colour code system and even internal to DHS but the impact, the large impact was external, so internal it was, what do we want the Coast Guard to do if we go to red? Or orange? Or yellow? What do we want CBP to do? What do we want TSA to do? What do we want any of the other agencies to do if we change colour codes? You establish all these protocols where you screen 'x' percent at yellow, at 2 'x' at orange, and ten times 'x' at red or whatever, whatever parameters you want, so that you were shown to be more responsive and of course each of those changes have costs associated with it, both in dollars to be prepared but also opportunity cost, and each time you have an increase in security its likely you're going to have a decrease in facilitation, and all that makes sense, the problem was that when you said, let's go from yellow to orange, is that you are incurring a cost in places where it wasn't necessary. So this became, the first time that we began to move away from

a single countrywide sort of approach was. Well, I can think of two things, I don't remember the dates of them. I think one time was in 2005 with the TOPOFF 3 exercise we began to realize, that, gee it didn't make sense necessarily to raise the colour code in California when we were focusing this exercise on New Jersey and New England. The one time that I remember that it explicitly, in the real world, was when there was a threat to the financial sector, and at that point we began to focus on sector, on changing the colour code for sector and for geography.

PK: So that was New York and Washington.

RC: New York and Washington, yes. New York, New Jersey and Washington. And once we sort of, and I remember being in those discussions. I don't remember in very great detail, but once we figured out that we don't have to make this across the country, which is so obvious right now, at the time it was a big step forward, why are we changing the alert system, the colour code, for the rest of the country, we'll just do it surgically.

PK: So why was it ever for the national level?

RB: Well, I think when we, after 9/11 we weren't, we viewed the threat very simplistically. I think we had this notion that we would know that we had intelligence that the terrorists were going to attack us, they were going to attack us, I mean, that is not very granular, but as our intelligence got better it became, we began to learn that they can be lots of different groupings of people, and us can be lots of groupings of people, and so it became more refined that this group is planning on carrying out another aviation attack, or this group is planning on carrying out an attack against the financial sector. And so, as our intelligence and understanding of the threat became better, as our understanding of vulnerabilities in consequence became better, it just became obvious that it wasn't this, they are going to attack us and therefore we, this monolithic we, need to be ready and change our status, it became, there is a specific group of people contemplating this specific action against a specific target, and so we became more sophisticated. I mean, in hindsight, it's sort of like, duh, why didn't we think of that? That's an excellent question. But in the midst of it we were growing and evolving and our understanding of who was perpetrating the threat, what the threat was and who it was against.

PK: But I think it was written in to the Homeland Security Presidential Directive Three that it could be geographically specific, so that's the very founding document of it.

RB: Yes.

PK: But that was just not something that followed through immediately, for the reasons you just gave?

RB: I think, yes, I think that there was contemplation of it being more refined, but certainly the first sector of it, that I recall, was the financial sector threat, and then it was just natural evolution. I think there wasn't necessarily an "aha" moment, but once you, once we did it for the first sector, we started saying well let's not jerk all these other organizations around, let's try to describe it in, let's focus where we're going to change the threat level and then we evolved into, let's try to use words to even go further in describing the threat, and as we began to do that, the whole notion of the colour-code system became more and more obsolete. And, the idea was let's really try to describe it in words.

PK: And was it that, so you said there that organizations there were to an extent getting jerked around, so was it that states and organizations were giving you feedback, saying, because I know there was some dissension amongst certain states, say Hawaii, who wouldn't deem themselves at the same risk and were begrudging the fact that they had to pick up the overtime costs, or, so that was one of the reasons?

RB: It was a huge driver, because who's going to pay the overtime costs? And, there was some, and I don't know the details, there was some mechanism for some funding for states, but it certainly wasn't adequate, and, you know, the idea of having to pull both our

own organizations, and state and local organizations, and business, through these hoops, when it really wasn't necessary, became pretty obvious.

PK: You mentioned there the Coast Guard, which is quite an interesting example, and I notice that you award there, do you have a history in the Coast Guard? And they have their own version of the System. I want to say the MARSEC.

RB: The MARSEC.

PK: Which they still have today, only it omits the very lowest levels, the green and blue. So is that something they introduced simultaneously to meet their own needs?

RB: I can give you sort of general ideas. The ports, I'm not sure what the genesis is... the Coast Guard prior to 9/11 had already had this MARSEC system in place, who did what at various threat levels in ports, and it was tied into things that were stable enough that they couldn't be changed easily when the rest of the country, or when the country developed the colour-code system. And there was a lot of debate. Well, why can't the Coast Guard do that? Well, because there were some statutory issues, and legal issues, and all that kind of stuff. So the decision was made to keep the two separate systems, and the Coast Guard is fluent in both systems, so it wasn't a big deal. Everyone knew what the MARSEC system was, all the people that had to deal with it. And it just was not feasible to change that whole system.

PK: Something a little more controversial now, and something I haven't really made up my mind about personally, which is the whole was there wasn't there manipulation of the system. So, a gentleman at Cornell who I've spoken to released, he was PhD student there, released a paper in 2004 which correlated boosts in the polls for President Bush just after the alert level was raised. And I think went Ridge left, in Ridge's memoirs, Tom Ridge's memoirs, he suggests that there may have been pressure on him to raise the alert at politically expedient times. Yes, I swing between thinking that's true, to thinking that's wild conspiracy theory, what would you make of that?

RB: What did Ridge actually say in his book?

PK: He says that he was in a meeting where it was being decided it should be raised, and I think he suggests that Donald Rumsfeld and John Ashcroft, were pressuring, they were certainly advocating that it be raised, when representatives from the DHS suggested that it didn't need to be. And then he, I think he says, and this was a moment when security and politics blended, we couldn't see the difference between security and politics, he said it was a very interesting period in recent political history, something like that, but he doesn't actually say...

RB: Yes, well you have to remember, at least when you're dealing with me, that you're dealing with perceptions, and I don't have my notes that I can go to and tell you all this stuff. So, it's perceptual history instead of factual history. My sense is that, several impressions. One is that Ridge would have, did, would have strongly resisted the political pressure, the pressure to change the system based on politics. And I remember discussions and impressions about that during a particular period of time, and I don't remember which particular period of time, but I also had the distinct impression that Ridge was resisting making political decisions, and did not succumb, or did not participate in any type of overt decisions that were based on the political outcome. That's point one. Point two, I don't put it past Rumsfeld or Ashcroft to have been well aware and influenced by political decisions, in changing that. So that's point two. Point three is that neither Rumsfeld or Ashcroft or Cheney, any of the people outside the Department of Homeland Security had as nuanced and as clear an understanding of the impact of changing the alert as Tom Ridge did. And so there was always a knee-jerk reaction, an inherent knee-jerk reaction from Ashcroft and the Department of Justice to raise the alert level, because to them they were still thinking in this non-nuanced, blunt method of, they're going to attack us and we want the country, they didn't understand the impact of changing the alert level, so they were very glib about saying we ought to change it. Ridge had an understanding, having been a former governor, and now having to deal with the



consequences of having to change it, had a much clearer understanding of what the consequences were, and was more cautious and careful about crying wolf, or dragging the nation through these perturbations that were going on. And then, there's another point that I was going to make, but I don't, the upshot is that while I'm sure there were people that were considering. Oh, I know what the point was, and it's also hard though, to separate the policy, the public perception of doing and not doing things from the political motivation behind it, so it is perfectly legitimate for any President to say if I take this action, what is going to be the public perception. Are we going to lose credibility? Are we going to, you know, because that may effect, you don't want to cry wolf if you don't have to, there's that piece of it, we are using this system, are we being too slow to react? What if something happens and we haven't gone to red, then that's going to really, that's going to be bad for us, is that a political decision, is that a policy decision, is that a good governance decision, and it's hard to tease those things out. So, while I'm sure there were people that were committing a political calculus, a partisan political calculus, and those people exist, they're on one hand, I'll put Ridge and the bureaucrats, the professional security people, whether they're bureaucrats or political, the professional security people, sort of on the other hand, what's the right thing to do for the country in terms of preparedness and readiness and being at the right level? So you have those two extremes. And I clearly put myself in this extreme over here [gestures toward the 'security professional' end of the spectrum], but in between that is a continuum that I don't think is necessarily bad, it's, so what is the impact of doing this? What are the polls going to show? Are people going to react? On the one hand, are people going to get tired of it and then not be prepared for the next event? If we don't tell people about this, and something happens, are we exposing ourselves to liability? Do we have a duty to warn? All of those type of discussion went on, but those discussions were legitimate and well short of a political discussion, so it's not an either/ or, it's, I'm sure there were people over here on the political end, most in the majority of discussion among the professionals, I think I was very, very legitimate, and then there were these sort of duty-to-warn issues, and that goes into legal liability, and that goes into reputational liability and then, ultimately, into political liability, so I'm not sure that it's, I know it's not an either/ or, it was a spectrum, I think most of the activity occurred on the very legitimate end of the spectrum.

PK: Yes, I think that's a very good answer. There are some people I've spoken to that envision Karl Rove, or someone sat there, with his statistics table, thinking, oh good, I get a two-point boost if I do it now.

RB: I don't think there was much of that.

PK: But yes, like you say, there might have been political factors that came into deciding whether to raise it that aren't actually Machiavellian designs, they're just, kind of, trying to get the message out as accurately as possible. Yes, I think that's fair.... In talking about it in these kinds of ways, was there a dimension of it that was, if not the primary role of it, it was kind of a mood technology? It was a way to say, we're on top of things, we have a way to calibrate the threat that we're under.

RB: Well, clearly.

PK: Is there that aspect, as well as, we're at red, we need to do these concrete measures, it's the fact that the System exists, means that we're on top of things.

RB: Well, I'm hearing two different questions. Having a system and a way to measure is, and being able to gauge the threat, and building confidence with the population, yes, was clearly a factor in there. And I think, it was sort of, a predecessor to this idea of resilience, the more knowledgeable a population is, the more prepared, the more resilient. The Brits, you guys came out with the first paper on this in 2005 time-frame. It was a British government paper, a British government paper on resilience and I took this, and I was very much impressed, and I told, I wrote the Secretary a note that, the head of policy of the Secretary in those days, and I said, we need to adapt this and we need to embrace resilience. Because this is the way people are going to be talking about preparedness, in five years, and we can either lead the conversation on it, or we can be explaining why Steve Flynn, I don't know if you know who he is?

PK: Yes, I've been corresponding with him.

RB: So he said, we can either lead the discussion on it, or be explaining what Steve Flynn means by resilience. We chose not to lead the conversation on it, and we had to mean what Steve Flynn meant by resilience. Steve is a good friend of mine, and I've helped shape his thinking on resilience, but, but. So I think the idea of the colour-code system was a sort of natural step along the path of getting to the conversation on resilience, how to prepare the population.

PK: Yes, it's especially interesting when you get into inter-country comparisons, so, the way that Israel, say, or Great Britain deal with the threat of terrorism. Although, interestingly, Britain in response to the, we always had a colour-coded system as I understand it, but it was only, like the colour-coded system here was only originally intended, it was only intended in Britain for government level, so in government buildings they have a colour-code saying today the chances of an IRA attack or whatever, and it was colour-coded, I think black was the highest, or black special or something. But I think in response to 7/7 and inspired by the American system they introduced a new one without colours, but with the same five levels, it gets broadcast to the public, so it's certainly not a unique American experience this system. Okay, then a couple more broad questions just to finish, I wondered, Ridge, Tom Ridge says, somewhere, he's says somewhere that the Department of Homeland Security has to be right 100% of the time.

RB: Yes, I mean to paraphrase his quote, we, the government, have to be right all the time, and the terrorists only have to get right once. I hate that analogy! I think it's misleading.

PK: Go on.

RB: Well, we have built and designed a system that requires terrorists to be right and to get through a lot of wickets before they're successful. And so we can fail, if we set up fifteen wickets and fail on fourteen of them, we still succeed in keeping them out. And I think it does us a disservice to not recognize that. Ultimately, we have to, so I just don't like that statement. And people still use it today, and it just drives me crazy. I mean, you look at the TSA, is one of the last elements of it, it's the intel world, we succeeded very successfully in this latest underwear bomber plot, because we, terrorists got through wicket one, two and three, but we stopped them at four, but we still had opportunities at airports screening at manifest at four or five opportunities.

PK: Yes, right, I think people are probably used to thinking of airport security as the first line, because that's the first line that they see.

RB: We think of it as the last line.

PK: Right, the underwear bomber that was all completely abroad, right.

RB: Yes, the most recent underwear bomber, the other one, a bunch of things failed, ultimately, the bomber failed, one could argue that we didn't do such a good job on that, but one could argue too that because he had to go through so many wickets, that's what caused him to fail ultimately. He was too nervous, but it's unfair to say that we have to be right 100% of the time, because we're not and we still stop attacks, so.

[...]

RB: So, you've pulled the documents from the Homeland Security Advisory System Task Force.

PK: Right, I shouldn't think there are any documents I've missed there.

RB: Those are pretty straight forward. Yes, there was a little bit of, the, there's a lot of theatre associated with any change to anything, you create a task force and you, and who you put on the task force.

[...]

RB: There was a lot of pressure to sort of get rid of the colour-code. The fact that people made jokes about it, I think people attribute that that was too much of a, that that was more of a force for changing that in reality, people make jokes about anything, the problem was, it had outlived, the colour-coded system had outlived its usefulness because we had moved away from, even going from orange to red, I mean, I talked about early how we began to geographically and sector limiting, but we got down to where we were not only geographically and sector limiting, but measure by measure limiting. So, here's the threat, we created it in the early days, at least within the department, and I think everybody that had to change their alerts status, developed a hundred things that you can do, and you're going to do these, changing from yellow to orange, and these changing from orange to red, and then it got down to, well, here's the threat, let's just pick number 32, 34, 38, 44, 72, and put those measures in place. So, you ended up with more of a tailored system, than starting out with this very broad system that was, they're going to attack us, this group is going to use this methodology to attack this target, all the way down to, here's the very specific threat, let's use these measures, and so the colour-code system went from, it became obsolescent, because it was too blunt of an instrument, and so one of the questions we talked about in the new system, was, do you need to keep five levels? Well, we're only using three now, why kid ourselves, let's just stick with three. But let's make sure that we are informing the right group of people, as specifically as we can, about what the threat is, and what the target is, and then let people make rational decisions based on that, and by people you have several consumers, and we made this point in the taskforce discussions, you have the, one consumer is the federal government, one consumer is state and local government officials, and then a third consumer is industry and business. And a fourth consumer is the public, the general public. And so you need to be able to talk specifically to each of the consumers of the information, and you may reveal different amounts of information, so this sort of five colours, that we were only using three colours, was way too blunt an instrument, we'd already moved past that, so we needed to rethink it. And the Secretary had the opportunity to pull people in, building a taskforce, now this, to me, get's a little more interesting toward your thesis, and you haven't asked any questions on this, but the idea of having, so you want to change the system, what is it that you do to give you the political space to be able to change the system that you want to? One tool is you, you have tools of press releases and speeches and so forth, one tool is you create a task force, and you put the right people on the task force, and one, you're going to think well, think smartly about it, think, if not smartly, similarly to how you want.

PK: Building credibility for the change.

RB: Yes, and then you put people on there who are credible, you put people on their who are going to be influencers. And you drive the process by who you put as chairman, or executive secretary, and you create this space, that is necessary for you to do what you want to do. So, were we independent? Yes. But, we were part of an effort that had a pre-, a desired outcome.

PK: Which gets us back onto the spectrum, and talking of the constituency of the taskforce, and I don't mean this in a disparaging way, I'm just interested, I noticed that the President of the Navajo nation, Joe Shirley, that seemed a strange, everyone else was a homeland security expert.

RB: Well, not really. There, as I recall, there were a lot of people that weren't experts on there, but, the whole notion of Indian nation is important political notion in this country, particularly for Democrats, this was a Democrat administration, so being inclusive, to be respectful of the Navajo, the Indian nations, tribes, and tribal governance, and so there was a token representative from the tribal governments, more than a token.

#### 9.4.2 *Medea Benjamin*

PK: What I'm looking at specifically is homeland security policy and in particular the color-coded alert system, as was... so, the whole homeland security movement in the US, and particularly the warning system, the color-coded warning system that's now been repealed. But I'm also very interested in resistance movements to homeland security and how it's been satired and critiqued. So I wonder if we could start, if you could tell me where the origins for the idea of Code Pink came from. What was the historical context, where did it emerge from?

MB: It came from the color-coded alert system and thinking how ridiculous it was, actually, Code Pink didn't exist and a group of us from an environmental conference were sitting around in an afternoon break, and that's where the color-coded alerts had come out and they had put out this crazy idea that you would get plastic sheeting and duct tape if the color-code went to orange and we were like, "this is crazy", this idea, of the Code Pink. Did you want something more specific than that?

PK: No, that's great. So, it's not just the name of the organization, but the organization itself seemed to stem from these warnings that were coming out?

[Interruption]

PK: Right, so it wasn't just that the name was a play on it? But the whole organization stemmed from these terror alerts?

MB: Yes, I mean we were, some of us like myself had already been involved in trying to organize around the Afghan war which had just started, but I was part of another organization, Global Exchange, we weren't trying to create anything new, it was really just sitting around talking about those color-coded alerts, that made us realize how ridiculous this whole thing. I mean, we were thinking we were going to get into something that was going to be years of keeping us in this state of fear with these silly color-codes and we laughed, you know, laugh and cry at the same time about all of this male testosterone that was flying around from Osama bin Laden, to George Bush, to Saddam Hussein, thinking, Jeez, this world is run now by a bunch of crazy men, with a "bring it on" mentality, and, of course, Osama bin Laden's mentality, so, yes it really was very spontaneous and in response to that color-coded alert idea.

PK: Interesting. So, like you say, men can join the organization, but obviously it's a predominately enterprise, and is that, and I think you kind of mentioned it there, but that's to flag up the patriarchal nature of conflict? These endless amounts of bravado and machismo that always surround the discourses of these things.

MB: Yes, and there were some people in Code Pink that really wanted it to be a women's group. I was one that continued to dissent around that, and said that there was no need to be a women's group, what we really need is something that was women-led and, yeah, I, for one, wanted to encourage men to go into Code Pink. It's a positive and a negative to be known as a mostly women's group, and men feel for the most part intimidated about joining and that kind of reduces your ability to reach out to a broader population, but there is something very positive about something that is unique about being a women's, and not just women, but women who care passionately about these issues, we're willing to put our bodies on the line, but also are very creative and fun-loving. And so while a lot of groups have gone by the wayside in the last couple of years, after so many years of frustrating work, we're still around and, I would say we're not nearly as dynamic as we were years ago, just because the movement itself is not as dynamic, but we are one of the few that survived Obama.

PK: So how has the work that you do, how has that changed across the last ten years, I guess?

MB: How has it changed? It's become much more difficult. We used to be able to organize rallies of literally hundreds of thousands of people, now if we could get a thousand people

together we would be very excited about it, so yes, it's a totally different thing now, we don't have anywhere near the numbers that we used to have.

PK: Yes. And so the name of the organization, and this pink theme, which has often, it would be wrong to say a uniform, but it's often something that the members of the group wear, particularly on demonstrations, has that become, how important is that visual dimension to the organization? Or how important was it to the organization? Did the pink become something that, a casual uniform? Or an unofficial uniform?

MB: Yes. It's pretty unofficial, there are people within Code Pink that hate pink! A lot of our New York contingent insist on wearing black, or people that are part of Code Pink that are nonconformists, "I'm not going to conform to the pink uniform, either", so it's not obligatory, even though when we first started, I didn't even have a pink scarf when we started Code Pink, but now everything I wear is pink, and it's only when I want to sneak into a place that I don't wear pink, but I find that it's a nice identifier, and I also find that it makes life easy when you get up in the morning. I'm on a book tour now, and my suitcase is so tiny because it's just a bunch of pink shirts, and pants.

PK: Yes. And Medea. Obviously, I'm British, so this makes a little sense to me, but where did this whole idea of homeland security come from, so you mentioned it earlier, suddenly you've got Bush and to an extent bin Laden, these kinds of guys, but where in the American context did this idea come from, it seems rather odd I think from a British perspective that suddenly there was this new department formed and these massive homeland security movements.

MB: Well, you know, I think that there were a convergence of factors that this whole idea of a national security state, is something that some of the people in the government have wanted for a long time and certainly there's a huge multi-multi-million dollar industry that is making a lot of money over the private contracting and the selling of equipment and now, I've been working a lot on drones, I've a new book out on drones, that's a multi-billion dollar business just right there, there's a lot of money to be made in this homeland security business. And people have just taken advantage of it and it's just grown beyond belief and it's part of that whole idea, it came out of that color-coded system, that, keeping people in a sense of fear, so it doesn't matter how much money you spend on security, no amount is too much to keep us safe, and it keeps the Pentagon going after the end of the Cold War.

PK: Right. Yes, and it's interesting as well that this color-coded system really was implicated in that politics of fear. So I wondered whether you would be one of those people that subscribed to the fact, that, there have been studies done that show that when the level of the alert is changed Bush goes up in the polls, or Bush used to go up in the polls, for example.

MB: Yes, right, and could get away with all kinds of things from spying on Americans to violating our civil liberties, to violating the rights of people overseas, it was a justification for all kinds of things that went on under the Bush regime and continued to go on under Obama right now. It's quite amazing how much Americans are willing to give up, when they have been convinced that this is all about homeland security and keeping us safe at home.

PK: Yes, it's amazing how much Obama has kept going a lot of the earlier politics, so Guantanamo Bay, for example, and, like your work is currently, he's even upped the level of drone attacks.

#### *9.4.3 John Bringham*

Philip Kirby: So basically, I'm just doing a history of the colour-coded system, but I'm particularly interested in how it's been picked up by popular culture and satirical artists and things like this. Which is why I was so interested in your paper, because it's one of the best I've found, certainly, in that kind of area.

John Brigham: Are there others? I thought I almost brought it down in some senses?

PK: I think I've, one off-hand comment somewhere else, but you've pretty much nailed that aspect of it! What I was interested in, really, where did your interest in the colour-coded system come from?

JB: I think it came, in the first part I was very much driven by the desire to see how humour played a part in politics, then the warning system itself, although the warning system struck me as hysterical enough to comment upon. Actually, as I got into it, I was surprised that there were actually quite a lot of serious people who thought it was a reasonable thing. I noticed more the comedy. It was a time that a lot of people younger than me were getting most of their news, in the United States, from Jon Stewart and comedy shows, rather than regular shows. That whole deep significance of comedy as a way to understand important things was exciting to me, and it drew me to that, that particular subject.

PK: Yes. What do you think of the power of humour to work as a critical tool, especially in, poking fun at the war on terror and homeland security and things like this?

JB: Well I think it's very serious. I think that we, in political science, think that art is part of politics, that's pretty well known, and it's a kind of art, satire, and humour, and comedy shows, are only now being recognised in my field. Our field is kind of backward, it took that idea of being scientific and political science is so serious, that it misses a lot of stuff. I mean the issues of attractiveness and being seen are in politics, so there's more of it now. And I don't think it knows what to do with comedy. Obviously literature and the literary areas of the academy are more familiar, but even there I think there's a sense, I mean the whole issue of seriousness is antithetical to either not knowing anything, or being funny about it. So that whole new dimension is exciting.

PK: It's the same in my field, political geography, in the last few years there's definitely been a movement toward looking at cartoons, films and popular culture like that, to see how they're working in building up people's imaginations and understandings of the world.

JB: And I think we go back to the high point in the '30s when comedy became mainstream. And the comedy that I grew up with seemed kind of peripheral, and there were people like Bill Cosby and Lenny [inaudible] seemed important, but more if you were looking at them and trying to understand comedy, than war. And the war on terror, to understand the war on terror, I think you have to understand some of the comedy about it. And that's new, certainly in the United States anyway, maybe not so much in the UK.

PK: I think there have been some similarities. What's interesting as well is how people like Jon Stewart and Saturday Night Live, there was that hiatus I think you say in your paper after 9/11, when people were less willing to laugh, it wasn't a humorous time, the mood was wrong, and they were really on the vanguard of making fun of the war on terror at all, the first people to do that.

JB: Yes. And they did stop, right after the World Trade Center went down, for a little while, in a way that news stories didn't stop. It wasn't clear how in comedic, and there was also a little bit of a gap, which was interesting to watch where they were trying to figure out how to handle something that was new. I mean Sarah Palin was interesting in that way because they took her on fairly quickly, although a serious, new, fairly attractive, female politician was something I don't think they knew fully how to handle. But they did that, and also even the war on terror, after a break of a few days or a week they came back pretty aggressively. And then some of the other, some of the other comedy, I was just looking at this play about Mormon, the Book of Mormon, which is pretty incredible. I would have thought there would have been fear about being blasphemous at some point, but I guess not, it's a continuation of the same story. Comedy has a lot of faith and a lot of power and support these days.

PK: Yes. Another link I like in your paper, too. And I think it was a wonderful comparison, again it's the only place that I've read this comparison, is to the gay pride movement, the gay pride rainbow flag in particular. What do you think, generally, about the gendering of homeland security? Obviously war is often seen as a masculine kind of thing, but I wonder if you could elaborate on that comparison a little more?

JB: Well I have heard some wonderful people, I teach in Amherst, Massachusetts, which is a pretty strong community for feminist theory. And a woman named Cynthia Enloe gave a talk, on perhaps the second or third day...

PK: Oh, I know her.

JB: And she was wonderful, about what you're afraid of, basically if you're a woman. And there were these images of essentially giant trucks, with American flags on them, which was supposed to be, under the 9/11 theory, normal people, and the way she was talking, women had often been a little bit intimidated by these men in trucks with flags, whereas there were relatively few Muslims abusing women, so she was comparing the riled flag waving and the dynamics of that, with what we were taught we were supposed to be afraid of and that, she wasn't doing it in terms of humour, but she was raising really serious questions that we a lot like the ones comedians were raising, and I appreciated that. I don't know if she published that, I haven't seen it in print. She gave the talk, but she retired right about then, so it may be published in a book.

PK: Yes. Her work *Bananas, Beaches and Bases*, that's pretty big in the field I'm in as well. She's definitely a popular author. Just on the semantics of the term "homeland". Again, in your paper you reference it to, that prior to its usage in the modern context it was a Nazi term in a lot of ways. That's the only reference that people had to it.

JB: I thought it was strange that they used it. And liberty, which I think the same group uses a lot, it's always there to be grasped, it seems like it has this generic, positive, certain kind of patriotism, but I don't think that it did, my sense was that it was much more like, to do with Nazi chauvinism than anything that was home-grown. I mean home-grown is not the same as homeland, it was the homeland that struck me as an odd reference at that point. But I don't think I went back and did as much as I could to establish if that was a new and somewhat unusual use of it.

PK: But it's still a very valid point I think. I found a couple of references in late 2000, where it's just coming in, talking about homeland security and homeland defense, but I can't find a reason why it particularly took off. I can't find one moment where it was suddenly part of the zeitgeist.

JB: I guess that's why the humour about the color-coding was so powerful; the people that were putting it forward came across as humourless. They struck me as thinking that this was a necessary, useful warning system that somehow we could elaborate and didn't see the humour in it. The other part of that, I don't know if you have references, I don't think I made reference to it, that I wasn't speaking only in terms of colour. I grew up in California, where other notable warning system was for fires, but the only other fact where I actually know where colours were being used to convey levels of threat, as opposed to just plain palette, a palette of colours. But the threat, the threat thing was always on Smoky Bear, California, and not in any other places that I was aware of.

PK: Okay. It's interesting, because we have a system over here in Britain, it's called, bizarrely it's called the BIKINI system, and it's a colour-coded terrorist alert system, which came in in the '70s and they got rid of it just a couple of years ago. But again, I can find no kind of lineage; I don't know where these things are coming from. I guess colour is a good shorthand, colour is a good shorthand for people knowing what's going on. Red is obviously bad, green is obviously good.

JB: But you had it going back to the '70s? I didn't even know that.

PK: Yes, it's a system, it's only for governmental buildings and governmental employees, like the colour-coded system in America was only originally intended at the federal level, and yes this goes back to the '70s, I guess as the IRA were building up momentum it came in and it's a colour-coded system. It has different colours, I think it black is one, and white is one, but yes, that's been around for about 30 years.

JB: No, I didn't know that. And from my perspective at the moment is that we really didn't talk about terror. Timothy McVeigh was executed right before 9/11 and there was relatively little discussion of him in the global terrorist sense, and there still isn't, still they tend not to talk about him as one of the terrorist threats in the same way that we have conventional, I guess maybe theorists, but the popular culture doesn't associate those, tends not to associate those home-grown Right Wingers, with the terrorism that followed 9/11.

PK: Yes. I guess terrorism has just become synonymous with al Qaeda, that's the same, even with the history of the IRA that we have over here, even now terrorism is really just synonymous with al Qaeda and, up to a short while ago, Osama bin Laden, but strange how it's completely taken over.

JB: What you're making me aware of is that I guess it was possible to bring it over here without having a sense of that history, which was not inconvenient, that history was more domestic and would suggest the kind of separatism here, which is what McVeigh and those other guys out in the West represent. They don't have a place in the same way, but there's a kind of similar, I had been working on it and I taught classes where I dealt with what I called the liberalism of the philosophy of the bomb. The idea here that the state would sort of fall apart if people lost faith in the hegemonic power of the state to protect them. And it seemed to me that liberals, they don't really operate in that way. Advanced, industrialised societies have a much more pervasive way, that kind of [inaudible] notion of power in the little places, that's not going to be disrupted by blowing people up. And so it was convenient that I was critical of terrorism, but from a more ultra-Left position, that it was bad political philosophy, rather than bad strategy. And so I think I was thinking about that before the colour-coding, but it definitely didn't come through in the article.

PK: So were there any positives about the system at all? Even the philosophy behind it, was it a good idea? Obviously it kind of came out of that moment where American was getting to grips with this new post-9/11 world, but were there any positives about it?

JB: That's one of the things that struck me about humour that once you saw it arrayed in various ways it seemed kind of silly. And also there was a sense, I thought, of a very imprecise, I mean the colours being fairly starkly graded, means that it wasn't an array on a colour spectrum, it was these blocks of colour, so we really could tell that this was a high alert, from a medium alert, to a low, I never thought anyone very convincing about that. So that people were sure if we were up at orange, or red, something, it really, really was more dangerous. And the other thing is that colour-coding was co-ordinated with some story, some event that just happened. In fact, I heard a much more nuanced discussion of the high alert I think Washington, no New York City, was under after the hotel bombing a couple of days ago, attacked a couple of days ago. I think it was the New York Chief of Police was quite sophisticated about saying, "We don't have any particular evidence, but when these things happen we get more alert". And I mean way different from the colour-coded kind of notion, that we have data that means that we've gone to the next level. He was sort of more soft, rhetorical, saying something happened in the rest of the world and we watch more carefully. And it wasn't that we were a particular notch or degree, but rather, I think it was actually trying to get away from the gradation, and to convey it's unlikely that something's going to happen, but something just did happen, so we always are more alert. You're either on or you're off, sort of thing; an on or off switch, rather than an array of colour.

PK: I think the fact that there were no published criterion, it was very subjective for the reasons why it would even change level, and I think that opened it up in a lot of ways to accusations that it was being manipulated for political reasons, so being bumped just before elections and so forth.



JB: That's part of it; I think that's a big part of it. And there was manipulation, there was.

PK: So just lastly, what do you make of the new system then? So you've kind of hinted at it there with your comments on New York, but what do you think of the more targeted, less colour-coded obviously system?

JB: The new system. I don't really know the new system, I'm sorry. I was drawn in large part because humour was such a feature of that story and it seemed to work very well. I haven't been monitoring, although what I said, it seems to me that in New York there appears to be a move towards a less rigorous system as a way of making a different point. A point that this isn't a precise thing, and I think that even now the total mess at the airports, it's not that we're going to get everybody and this is totally precise, or even totally sensible, but we're doing something and we want everyone to know that we're doing something and that's good. That's a positive thing. So I think from the effort early on to be maybe overly refined, there seems to be a move in the other direction. That's all I would say about the current regime.

#### *9.4.4 James Jay Carafano*

Philip Kirby: So just a quick overview of what I'm doing. I'm basically doing a biography of the HSAS, the system, tracing the official kinds of decisions and reviews of the system as well as commentaries from experts in the field, such as yourself. So just to start, what were the main flaws of the system as you saw it?

James Jay Carafano: Well there's three criteria for effective risk communication, one is that it's understandable, in other words, that people can understand the message, what it means. One is that it's credible, that there's actually something to worry about. And third one is that it's actionable, that there's something they can do. This didn't meet any of those three criteria. Now having said that, the advisory system was never created to be a public risk communication system. It was primarily designed to co-ordinate federal, local and state support measures, and then what happened was, is everybody said well what do we do? What do American people do? So then they started created this orange, yellow and everything else. So in a sense part of the criticism was critiquing the system for what it was never supposed to be. It was never supposed to be, this is how we're going to inform the public about terrorist threats. That was really something that came on later, to my understanding.

PK: From your articles I've seen that you've said it would be better just left as a federal thing, than being spread to the public as well.

JJC: Well, I think that you have to differentiate between these two different purposes. One, is to co-ordinate federal, state and local response efforts. And the other is as a public communication. As a public communication system it was never a good idea. As a coordinating system between the federal, state and local governments, I think it was very new idea, that you could argue very quickly, after 9/11, we didn't know how many terrorist attacks we were really going to be having we didn't know how big of a problem it was, and it may have been a system that kind of made sense. But, after a few years, and after the evolution of the Department of Homeland Security and so forth, and the nature of the terrorist threat, it didn't really serve that purpose very well either. You know they adopted this from the military model, the DEFCON model, which was designed to deal with a very different kind of threat. And it very quickly demonstrated the weaknesses in that, because when you're dealing with a global war it's easy, right, but when you're looking at, it could be, the threat could be in one little place, or it could be national, it was just not flexible enough to really deal with that, and so what you very quickly saw early on was attempts by Secretary Chertoff to manage the system so it could, adapted it, so for example we went to a higher alert level for aviation. I don't think, you know one of the main criticisms of the system is that it was ratcheted up for political purposes. I don't think there's good evidence for that. Even the statements in Ridge's book I think were taken a bit out of context. What is very interesting is that when you look behind it there was never really

any structure behind it. There was never, how do you know to go from yellow to red or whatever. There wasn't any real protocols.

PK: Yeah, it was very subjective in that regard.

JJC: It was. Completely subjective. Which I suppose opens, logically, opened them up to criticism.

PK: But were there any positives of the system at all?

JJC: No. Well I shouldn't say that. I think early on it was a tool to synchronise local, state and federal response actions and creation expectations of what was done to go to higher levels of alert, right. Because we didn't really have an integrated, national approach to this, before 9/11. So, I think it had some utility. And of course there was a great demand to do something, right. But I think it was the wrong model to begin with. But I think it was the most ready one at hand, which is why it was.

PK: What were some of the places that it was seen. So the airports, for example, were the major place that it was seen, rather than television?

JJC: Well, if you remember early on, it was everywhere. I mean they had every colour on the TV screen, 24 hours a day they were showing what the colour code was. Website, if you go to the government's website, it was prominently displayed, the code was yellow or whatever. It quickly became pretty ubiquitous. I think most associated with airports, because it was announced over the speaker system.

PK: Sure. Did it become in some ways an icon? Because, I mean maybe not for the right reasons, but it's on 24, for example, the television show, it's on Jon Stewart. It's on these kinds of things. Did it actually become more of an artistic object than anything else?

JJC: Well, like many things, it did, and it also became, well it was something you could do, right. So, for example, I teach, and I would do disaster management exercises and very often, when I would cover this area, the first thing that they would do is change the colour code. And so I was like why are you doing that? And so they were saying we're doing something. We're Americans and we're doing something. So really it was a discussion about what do we need to do, what's most efficacious, let's change the colour code, because that shows we're doing something.

PK: What do you think of the new system? One of your articles you very presciently say that it's better to drop the colour coded thing and just have two levels which is what they've ended up doing now. So is the new system an improvement?

JJC: Well, I think so. And I think we won't actually see many warnings on that system.

PK: No?

JJC: Because I think more often than not, when the authorities get actionable information, they'll just act on it. But that's okay, because you want to have, the last thing you want to have to think about risk communication is when a crisis develops. This was well demonstrated in Japan in the nuclear crisis, when you had this crisis developing and then the government hadn't really thought about how it was going to articulate that to the people and it turned out to be a nightmare. I mean, we saw the IAEA sending out their nuclear alert levels, which actually don't really tell you anything at all. But when people see the alert as the same level as Chernobyl, they get all panicky. But it was actually very different from Chernobyl. So the last time that you want to think about how to deal with risk communication is when there's a crisis.

PK: Yeah, but what is a good way to broadcast this message? You mention in one of your articles as well, social media, for example. And the new system uses that a lot more. Would that be a good way to spread the message, so to speak.

JJC: Well, it is. But again you have to kind of socialise people to it, because I also mention articles where social media, that risk communication, people have spooked risk communication through social media, one happened in Indonesia where people sent out tsunami warnings.

PK: In 2004.

JJC: And then people got pissed off, because you can't really call, and say this is a threat or whatever. So I think you've got to socialise, you have to socialise, because you're going to get social engineering in different ways. And we saw this, for example, when we started using radio to do emergency broadcast warnings. And then you had the famous War of the Worlds, Orson Welles show, and they used all the trappings of the warnings. And half the people thought we were really being attacked.

PK: They fell for it, yeah. In another article, I think this was the 2004 testimony to the House Subcommittee, just on the psychological dimensions of it. How was it affecting the public do you think? Was it engendering fear?

JJC: Well I think that people pretty quickly became oblivious to it. Which was a lot, it was like where the siren goes off and nobody pays attention.

PK: The boy who cried wolf.

JJC: Yeah, yeah, so the colour code changes and nothing happens. You walk through an airport and they say the colour code is orange, nobody's paying attention. You might stop someone and say what was the colour code. And they might not just have heard it over, it was a noise just part of the environment. The danger there is when something does happen, and they don't respond to it in an appropriate way.

PK: And just lastly, I'm aware that you're pressed for time, so I don't want to keep you too long, just lastly, when you testified before the House Subcommittee, that's quite a prestigious thing to do. I wonder if you could give me a little more information on that? What was the process?

JJC: I don't exactly remember. To me, what was more influential was when we did a series of reports with the Centre for Strategic National Studies. We did DHS 2.0.

PK: Yes, yes I've seen it.

JJC: And then we did a second one called Homeland Security 3.0, and in that report, we'd been talking before that, we specifically called for revising the system. And, a number of people, including David Heyman, the policy secretary, who's at CSIS, when he went into government, he went in with an agenda to change that. And so I took credit, and so when Dave Heyman went into the department, he kind of went in with the agenda to try and change that. And the Secretary became interested in that. And then she set-up a task force, under the Homeland Security Advisory Council, which did a review, and then came back and made a recommendation.

#### *9.4.5 Rich Cooper*

Rich Cooper: Since I was focusing on the national security area and I was in this brand new upstart, called Department of Homeland Security, and working on Tom Ridge's staff, it was, I can read about this stuff in a book, or I can be part of it from the very, very beginning.

Philip Kirby: Yes, I appreciate that sentiment. In academia you can get very, I've spent my whole life studying this thing, but I haven't actually done it. Do you know what I mean?

RC: It is what is called the ivory tower. Obviously, and that's fine, and that certainly has an appropriate role. I'm a guy that likes to be boots on the ground, and in the trench, and in the mix of it and they are two very different worlds and that's where, if you can help tell

part of the story of how the alert system developed and matured, there's something, there's a great lesson learned there I would say for future environments. The thing that, when we look back on that era, is, how could be so stupid to think it was going to be like that? But the part that leapt out, is, in the post-9/11 environment, this was such an incredibly brave new world on, how do you educate people about what threats are, what they aren't, what should they do, what should they not do, how should they prepare, what is preparedness. Now, there are whole industries and product offerings and lessons learned and certifications and degrees in those things. That was a very finite fishbowl after 9/11. I make the point, I have made the point when I was at DHS and even afterwards and still do today, if you had met with a group of people on September 10<sup>th</sup>, 2001, and asked them what homeland security was, you probably could have fit them in this country into a medium-sized gymnasium. On September 14<sup>th</sup>, when then President Bush went to the well of the national cathedral and delivered his remarks there, excuse me, not the 14<sup>th</sup>, but when he went before the Congress about a week or so later to talk about things he was going to do, the word homeland security was everywhere.

PK: Yes, that was about the 20<sup>th</sup>. That's when he introduces Ridge, right?

RC: That's when he introduces Tom Ridge and again everybody was using that term. For companies that were part of the defence-industrial base, they immediately, they looked at all the investments that they had been doing in DoD and military technologies and things that had been sitting on the shelf and they quickly went over and printed off all the new bumper stickers or something and they labeled it homeland security, because people were spending money left and right, because they all needed this equipment, because this threat etcetera. You had all the emotions, all the reaction that was happening in that environment. I think a lot of people oftentimes forget about how unsettling those times were and so when Ridge and his team, what was then part of the Office of Homeland Security over at the White House came up with the threat warning system, it was meant to be a common-touch tool to let people know where we're at. And the colours and terms that they used were very basic and very simple. But when people take a deep breath and they step back to say, "well, what does yellow really mean? What does orange mean? What does red mean?" And Ridge uses the analogy that we're flying a plane, as we design and build it at the same time, and that was the environment and when he came out with a particular tool. You know, all the protocols associated that if you declared a Code Red, hadn't been written yet. What does a Code Orange mean, what does a yellow; those were things that were literally being invented and detailed over time. I'm going to give you a couple of things, here, to immediately get you out. Tom Ridge, 'til the day he dies, when his biography is written years from now, will have the color-coded system attached to him forever, for better or worse. He does a wonderful job, in his book, describing its development, over at the White House. The person who is absolutely responsible for that; the person who I think deserves the credit for that, for the development of the System, is a guy by the name of Mike Byrne. That's an old bio of him; he is now back over at FEMA. Mike is retired captain of the fire department in New York City. He worked as the first director of the National Capital Region, when the Department of Homeland Security was created and had been in a few places in the industry, had worked for Microsoft for a little bit of time, spent some time out at ICF consulting, before going back into FEMA and working with Craig Fugate. Mike is the architect.

PK: Thank you. Yes, I'd traced him as far as FEMA, but I hadn't been able to find any email for him or anything. And this was the gentleman, I read from Ridge's book, that added the colours themselves.

RC: Yes. I'm going to write it down here for you, the mail. And hopefully this works. I believe it is Michael dot Byrne at FEMA dot GOV. Now, associated with anything like this; a tool like this. Oh, it's not FEMA, it's DHS dot GOV. Is the communications piece of that. Also in Ridge's book, if you've not read it, I've read it, I enjoyed it very much, and I know there are people who took issue with some things, but people take issue with anything. Whether it's the colour of the sky, or whether the sun radiates heat or not, is a woman by the name of Susan Neely. Susan is the president and CEO of the American Beverage Association and worked as Ridge's lead on communications at the Office of Homeland Security and then the Department of Homeland Security at the beginning. I'm going to

give you her name, as well; she can talk to you about that. She is now with the American Beverage Association, great person.

PK: So she was working on communications for...

RC: Yes, helping him go out and, in that environment, all of a sudden you were getting different pieces of intelligence coming in and sorting through any piece of intelligence is trying to figure out: what is fact, what is fiction, what is reality, what is hyperbole, what is actually capable of happening, or it's a Hollywood screenwriter sort of thing. What's often forgotten about in the immediate post-9/11 is that you had the anthrax threat that was going on. No-one had ever had anything like that.

PK: And when was that? November, 2001?

RC: It was October, November, post-9/11. And again, because it was something totally out of the blue, and it was of such a particular strain. And it had gone to NBC news and it had gone to key members of Congress. And at the time I was at NASA headquarters; NASA, we were hit with it as well. And the reason we were hit with it was because of how the mail was being sorted, and the one particular facility, we ended up having traces of it, as well. NASA was fortunate, we didn't have anyone who got ill or sick or anything like that, but we did end up putting in protocols, new mail safety protocols for the mail staff that were coming in. We literally had some people in moon suits, sort of going through NASA at some point to clean up the area where mail had come in.

PK: Did they ever get to the bottom of that?

RC: Well, they did. And there is a person who was associated with; he ended up committing suicide, when things were starting to close in. And the FBI had tracked this person down after looking at some people as prospective perpetrators of this that weren't, and so obviously their names and reputations were dragged through the mud wrongly. But this person subsequently committed suicide. There's not really a good understanding of why he did it. I myself, I'm not a conspiracy theorist; I think there's something else there. I just don't think this sentence ends cleanly with the period. There's some other things here. But, you know, I can't say I've been through every piece of evidence. So, those were a couple of quick things that I wanted to give to you, in the background, and let me stop there and take whatever questions and how I can help you out.

[...]

RC: But when I was at the Department of Homeland Security, I worked for what was called the Office of the Private Sector, which was led by Al Martinez-Fonts. I led the Science and Technology and Emergency Preparedness portfolios. It was my job, in the early days of the Department, to build relationships with the private sector, with the DHS components. One of the things, again, when you start a new business, and I'll use those terms in creating DHS, when you start a new enterprise like that, there's not necessarily a rulebook, so you literally get to invent and develop, sort of the playbook and the rules to go about that. And working for Al Martinez-Fonts, what he offered, having a distinguished and successful banking career is that the people he hired all had significant private-sector experience. We had all hired and fired people, we had all had to sign paychecks, we had all run different types of businesses, so that gave us credibility to go and deal with businesses, large and small, on a range of issues. When the Office was created it was very wisely determined that anything everything homeland security does has an impact on the private sector. So we literally became a gateway for the private sector to come in and talk about visa issues, supply-chain issues, security issues, information sharing, critical infrastructure, anything and everything, which was great. And so, one of the things we did very early on was trying to help the private sector understand what the colour-code threat warning system was, because if you're going to say, we're going to go to Code Orange, as we did in aviation. Let me back up, Code Orange nationwide, what does that mean to the power companies? What does that mean to a pharmaceutical firm? And nobody, nobody in the government, or the private sector, understood what those implications were. And so when the colour-code system was first being used, it was being

applied nationally. And so, whenever those things happened, people would ramp up security operations.

PK: Right, so I think I saw a statistic somewhere that said every time it goes to orange for a week, it costs a billion dollars nationwide.

RC: I think that's being generous on that. And that was because people were ramping up and being forward leaning on security postures, maybe they were screening trucks or cargo, whatever it may be with even more intensity. And whenever you go to that, that slows the process down, because you need more people and it's more labour intensive, so it has a huge ripple effect.

PK: So was that a reason that it slowly got retired? Because of the cost.

RC: I think that's a contributing, that's one of the lessons learned out of it. Because, again, everyone out of a post-9/11 environment was sort of grabbing you by the lapels and saying, "you have to do something! Tell us what to do, tell us what to do." And so the first thing they were doing was, we've got to have a system to educate the American public and so they created this initial system and because of that environment, no one I think fully no one fully understood what the costs and implications of that system would be. Over time, people started to understand the whole cause and effect relationship. That if I go to a Code Orange, what does that mean? And so, what Ridge did, and his team, appropriately, did, was, you had in the early days of the department, it would go Code Orange nationwide. Well, then he would bring it back down and we would be at Code Yellow. Again, you still have this big shadow of 9/11 and the loss of nearly 3,000 people going on your mind. When you had the threat, starting at the end of July, early August, 2004, against the World Bank, Citi Group, Prudential, etcetera.

PK: That was the more specific warning that came in then.

RC: Ridge, working with the intelligence community, decided to say, "we're not going to go nationwide, we're going to focus this in a core set of areas." We're going to focus it in New York, we're going to focus it in DC, we're going to warn financial services industry, "hey, the bad guys are out there and they want to get you." So, only New York and Washington need to put more people; deploy more people. The same way that when you had the threat. The liquid based explosive threat, that started in London against aviation. Chertoff specifically stated we're going Code Orange for aviation, because the threat they were able to determine, specifically, where the threat was, to what industry, and, while still sharing the information with everybody else, but trying to be more focused.

PK: Yes, the interesting thing about that alert, and I think in Britain we call that the Heathrow bomb plot.

RC: Yes.

PK: Is that it was kind of retrospective. Because by that time I think Britain had rounded up at least some of the people, and raised our own alert, and then Chertoff raised the alert over here. So, was the System meant to be preemptive or was it meant to be...

RC: It was a little bit, this is me, I'm going to say it's a bit of both, because while there was certainly cooperation between American law enforcement and intelligence and British law enforcement and intelligence, you had a pretty good idea who was on your side of the pond. As opposed to, we know who's on this side of the pond and trying to do something. You're dealing in an environment where, how al Qaeda and others use the web and electronic communications. No one I think is going to be so over to send in an email that "the bomb-plot begins tomorrow", they may be saying, in a particular code, that "the crow flies in the morning!" Well, okay, that could mean lots of different things. But that may be code-words before the operation has begun. There was no way of necessarily knowing. The other part of this also gets to, you know, the American public as any population is going to expect its government to be forward-leaning and protecting it. So they're going to do what they can. Much the same way that when you had the 7/7 explosion, the suicide

bombings, the morning that occurred, working in the operations centre at DHS, reaching out to the airports, the port authorities, New York public transportation, DC metro, all of those things, doing what you can to open up the communications links to make sure that any and all information is flowing, back and forth, so that people can mitigate the risk and be appropriately forward-leaning.

PK: Yes, so I guess the fear, specifically, was that this might be the first of a series of attacks.

RC: Right. Al Qaeda has always, when Al Qaeda attacks, they don't just do one. It is a series of things; their MO has always been to do a wave of things. It's not just one event, you know, it's two or three after. You saw this with the bombings in Africa in 1998, the embassy bombings in Africa and then you saw this, obviously, with 9/11 and what they were doing. And then all the other subsequent attacks.

PK: Yes, so like you say, it can be retrospective and preemptive at the same time?

RC: Right. And again there is this other cathartic portion that people, if the government's not going to stand up and say, "a bombing has occurred in London, we're not really going to do anything about that." A population, that in a 24/7 media cycle, where people can get now, the tweets, the Facebook posts, and all the other things that go instantaneous, "what do you mean you're not going to do anything? Are you lazy? Are you stupid? Don't you care?" People are going to demand that you be forward-leaning and expect it. Because if you don't, political opponents are certainly going to make hay out of that.

PK: But is that not, in a way, suggesting that the alert was raised more as a political, a display...

RC: Ridge and the White House were incredibly sensitive to that, because they knew that there would be people, detractors that would say, "this is all security theatre". This is all trying to play fear, play on people's fears. And I'll share a story with you, an experience I had in New York, during the financial services threat. Ridge knew, Ridge never ever wanted to raise the threat level at all until he felt, the information I have has gone to such a point, I need to do something, people, state, local, tribal law enforcement, they need to know, they need to be forward-leaning.

PK: Did he have a framework for this? Was it just a subjective feeling he had about it?

RC: There was a framework, and when he would discuss the threat level with persons at the White House. You know, those were all factors that they would go ahead and consider and debate. In Ridge's book, he does a wonderful job of sort of talking about how there were some people who wanted to raise the threat level and he wouldn't. Whereas, again, Ridge as Secretary of Homeland Security is being charged as the final voice, to say whether I'm going to raise the colour, raise the threat, or not. But that is not done without a lot of debate. You have intelligence community persons that don't want to necessarily share information, just because of keeping operational secrecy and being able to find out what is happening. And you've got other people who are clamoring for information, be it public or private sector entities, that are begging to know more. I had the experience when I was in the Department. I was with Ridge in Florida when he got the call from the White House that he needed to get back, because they had this threat information. And it was that weekend, it was a Sunday morning, that he went before television cameras and, after consulting with the president and others, that they were going to raise it because of the threats against the World Bank and Citi Group in New York, etcetera. I was in New York on Monday afternoon, meeting with businesses to sort of talk about it. I was there, 1) to be the eyes and ears for the Secretary's office, now my boss, but also to relay information that I saw, that was going back and forth. I met with a colleague from NYU, who runs what is called the International Centre for Enterprise Preparedness, his name is Bill Raisch, and he brought together a group of District Business Improvement leaders, and a range of other persons, and there was a woman who was part, I want to say of one of the Business Improvement Districts, she may have been with the 34<sup>th</sup> street partnership, but I can't be sure of that. She stood up and screamed at me, because there I was, the administration person that this was all about fear, this was all about politics,

because we were going into a presidential election, New York was going to host the Republican National Convention, and this was all about theatre, I didn't care about the private sector, the administration, this was all about the politics of fear. Who the hell did I think I was? I mean, called me every possible word in the book. And she was kind of getting the crowd going and, you know, feeling like I was about ready to be drawn and quartered. I said to her, 1) I thank her for her candor, but I have to ask you all the following. I said, and what Ridge did was unprecedented, the day before, Ridge released a lot, declassified, and released a lot of intelligence pieces about threats against the Prudential building in New Jersey, the threats against the Citibank building in New York. I mean, he was pretty specific. Most intelligence people don't ever want to get that specific for a whole range of reasons. I said the Secretary made the conscious decision which was to share this information. Information in this environment is power. You can make a decision once you have information of what you're going to do. And so I have to ask you, I said, very candidly, and I'll take this back to the Secretary and my boss, to take to the Secretary, I said would you rather us not share this level of information with you? Because in the previous environments there may have been threats against the World Trade Center, there had been threats against the World Trade Center, and nothing was shared, as we saw, when the 9/11 Commission came out. So, I have to ask you, do you or do you not, want us to share the information? Because we're in this new environment, and we're all trying learn, what do you say? Do you want it, or do you not? Because if you don't, I'll take that message back. The woman looked at me, I felt like she had put herself up on this chair and waving around and I didn't purposely kick it out from under her but I basically said, "do you want this information or not?" And everybody in the room turned, they did a 360, and they said, "We want the information and we'll make a decision on what we're going to do with our employees." She got up and stormed out. The other thing, and this is what is also interesting, when I was in New York. New York has what are called Hercules Teams and New York took a lot of its homeland security dollars and you see these, these are tactical units of the NYPD and they look like something that has come out of an Arnold Schwarzenegger movie. These guys have body armour, all over.

PK: Robocop.

RC: Robocop. There you go. And they're carrying a weapon that has probably only been seen in an Arnold Schwarzenegger film. Well, what they did at Grand Central, people were coming up out of their trains at Grand Central and there were Hercules units all over the place. Well, everyone was like, 'wait a second.' Tom Ridge and the city didn't mention anything about Grand Central being a target, they said it was Citi, why are all these guys here? What are they not telling us? They didn't tell us that this could be a target? Okay, Tom Ridge had nothing to do with the Hercules units. Ray Kelly, who was the commissioner of the NYPD made a conscious decision that he wanted to put his units out, front and centre, to be visible. To give comfort to people, to let them know that they were on the job. The converse of that was, people saw those units and thought, "oh my God, they're not telling us something. This is a threat." And so people, that increased the tension level there as well. New threat environment, that no one had been operating in. So people, but it was a lesson and a message that we took back and said to NYPD, "look, people are getting nervous." I met with the executive with the ALTRIA Corporation, which are right across from there, and they were talking about the people who were not coming into work because they saw the Hercules units. The other thing, and this goes to the importance of messaging on a threat like this, Ridge and the White House and the intelligence community specifically talked about the threats against Citigroup, or the Citibank, Prudential and those were specifically defined real estate targets in New York and New Jersey. What you ended up having, and I found this out when I was meeting with Prudential Execs. and Citigroup is that, when people saw that Citibank was a threat, people were interpreting that, "oh my God, all the Citibanks are a target.

PK: All the cash points as well.

RC: All the Prudential offices as well, mind you, there was very specific intelligence related to those buildings, but it all comes down to how people listen and interpret and take that information. When we were dealing with the colour-code system there was no



deep understanding and appreciation of, I will say the human behaviour dimension and how people will react to these things.

PK: Right. Were there psychologists working in the DHS?

RC: You know, I know a lot of people who could probably have used some, you know, across the board, everybody could have probably used them! But, no. I won't say that we had deep human behaviour specialists, because again, it was all about protecting people and assets from that environment. I don't think there was a full understanding and appreciation of human behaviour and how they would react. And that's why, over time, you saw Ridge focus the colour-code system, instead of going nationwide I'm going to do financial services. You saw Chertoff take it and go just aviation. And you saw what Napolitano has done to mature it, even further. This is all an evolutionary tool. I expect how the next administration, whether it's Obama getting re-elected or Romney going in, they're going to tune that some more. And the reason why, we're a whole lot smarter now than we were back then. What we did back then, I think was an appropriate response. We can make all the jokes we want about it, but there really weren't a whole lot of other options that we had, and so we had to figure out what was happening. There's another person I want to introduce you to, and I'll try and do this via email, he's a colleague of mine at Catalyst Partners, his name is Randy Beardsworth. And Randy, I worked with Randy at DHS, he worked under Ridge and Chertoff, and he was part of the transition team for Napolitano and he was part of the working group that worked with Napolitano and the White House to refine the colour-code threat system.

PK: Yes, and the interesting thing about security theatre, is, yes, from one perspective it can be negative, it can be playing on people's fears, but the other perspective is like you say these Hercules teams, security theatre can also be directed at potential terrorists, it can also be directed at them to say, "look, we're protected."

RC: Go some place else that's a harder place to hit. Aviation is now a much harder target for them to get, there are other, softer targets of which people could go to. And it comes down to having a security apparatus and strategy that is as dynamic and as adaptable as what the enemy is.

[...]

PK: Does that suggest an overreaction by America?

RC: Possibly. And I think it's an overreaction of anybody in that type of environment. A population is going to demand that its leadership do absolutely everything leaning forward, and so it puts all its chips in, puts in forward leaning actions and, you know, goes after those things.

PK: Right, because a lot of people come out with the statistics, you're more likely to be struck by lightning than killed in a terrorist attack. But obviously the difference is you can't have people targeting you. Lightning is a natural phenomenon, is a completely different thing. A country almost doesn't exist as a sovereign power if you're allowing people to attack you; you can't live with that kind of risk in the same way that you can a natural disaster.

RC: Right. And again there's a greater chance of you being hit by a bus, stepping out here, than any number of different types of threats that are out there. I mean, everyone's afraid of sharks whenever they go into the ocean. But they have a greater risk of drowning because of an undertow with the water, than they do being eaten by Jaws!

[...]

PK: I mean, things like this make me think personally, is the enterprise of homeland security even a feasible operation, because Ridge has a quotation somewhere that says something like, "We, the DHS have to be right 100% of the time, and the terrorists, one attempt."

RC: All they've got to be is lucky.

PK: So what would you say? Obviously you must think it feasible to a certain extent.

RC: There's no such thing as 100% security. It comes down to mitigating risk. And doing what you can, and that's where the key to mitigating that risk is also developing a resilience capacity. I don't think anyone has a more, better cultural mindset on the resilience of its nation and its people than probably the Brits and the Israelis. And part of that was, and again it was bombed and beaten into the Brits during the Blitz, during World War Two. We're going to get up, and we're going to go to work the next day, even though those goddamn Nazi bastards were bombing the hell out of us. Because, you know what? And you were an island nation and you were going to pull together through that. We in America have never, ever sort of dealt with that. We've never been bombed by anybody, with the exception of Pearl Harbor, which was a territory at the time. But the point, we felt we had the protection of our two oceans and peaceful neighbors. We don't really worry about the Canadians or the Mexicans sending their air forces to bomb our cities, we don't. The Israelis, their mentality, and again, tightly compacted, small nation, to where, when they have a suicide bombing attack they very quickly go in, they assess the situation. They collect the wounded and those who may be decedents, they clean up that situation, and within anywhere between two to four hours, it is all cleaned up, all the debris is taken, and there is someone there who is putting in a brand new bus stop, that you wouldn't know it had occurred. In our country, we would be, and the FBI and the intelligence would be roping the area off for weeks at a time, and it goes down to again a civil and cultural mindset that's where we in this country have got to start to develop some of those capacities. Now we have places that are susceptible to a lot of natural disasters, like tornado alley in the Mid-West of the United States, the Oklahomas, the Kansases, and that, people who regularly deal with these storms. People know what to do when they hear that siren and get into the basement. They also know that they are their neighbours need to pull together to clean the area out, so that they can get everybody in the neighbourhood back into shape, the kids back to school, the corner-store opened again. That is a mindset that they have started to develop, but it's developing a nationwide infrastructure, that larger resilience culture that is critically important, it can't be understated. One of the things I think Ridge was very critical to understand is that the colour system that you had was not designed to put fear in people, it was designed to empower them. Make the decision that is best for you and your family, based upon the information we have given you. If you choose to cower, that's your right and your responsibility, if you want to do that. But if you're going to say, "you know what, I'm going to make sure that my family has a communications plan. I'm going to make sure my business has backup records. I'm going to make sure I talk to my employees about what they do, about getting out of the building, in the event of an emergency." There are many things about this that are empowering rather than cowering, so I think there's that difference.

PK: Although America doesn't have the experience with terrorists attacks, excluding the recent history, but it does have that whole lineage of civil defence and shelters and Bert the Turtle and those kind of drills, so there was a historical body to build on there.

RC: There was, and it atrophied.

PK: Okay, so by the time we were talking homeland security that whole civil defence thing had been lost?

RC: I would say a lot of that had been lost, I mean you had people, I mean my parents certainly talked about the Duck and Cover drills, but I can't say that it all of my years of going to school I ever engaged in a Duck and Cover drill, no. We did fire drills. We knew, you lined up at the door, you followed the teacher out, she called your name out and stood out at the black top until you can go back in, but there have been some changes of recent because you've had some of the tragic shootings that have gone on in some schools and other places, where teachers and schools have implemented a bit, you know, an alert comes over the loud speaker, the teacher knows to lock the door, turn the lights out, get

away, get the kids and everybody away from the windows and get them under. Now, lots of schools have been doing that.

[...]

RC: We were certainly jitterish over 9/11, and no one, anywhere across the government, Republican or Democrat, was going to tell you not to be forward-leaning and proactive. But you get into the whole politics of things: if nothing happens, it's all about fear and theatre. I've long believed that DHS' motto, I don't know what the Latin for it is, but it should be, "Damned if you do, and damned if you don't."

PK: That's right, yes.

RC: You don't win in this environment. If I use the system and I alert people and nothing happens people say I'm playing Peter and the Wolf. If I don't use the System and something happens, obviously I'm incompetent and I wasn't doing my job. I don't win.

PK: Right, yes. The only hypothetical where you win is if you do warn them, and there is an attack, and obviously you don't want that either. But one of the things, like you were saying, at orange, so you get a set of specific protective measures that are implemented. So, for example, you mentioned Alexandria and a bridge would be shut at orange, so the logical thing that I what I would say to that is, isn't the logical time to be attacked, be, as soon as it goes back down to yellow? Because you know that security measures are being taken away.

RC: Possible. Absolutely. It comes down to how you're going to mitigate risk. This goes to bin Laden's point, I can spend you into bankruptcy. Cities, and localities, and even the federal government, even though this government, and our government for years, has spent with reckless abandon. A lot of cities and localities are forced to have a balanced budget. They can only do what they can do, and what they can afford to do, and that's where again, you know, the utilization of other tools and technologies and information sharing relationships that go on that basically say that, "you know, the threat whispers that we've been listening in on, that law enforcement may have, you know, warrants or something along those lines, have basically told us this threat is passed, we're going to keep an eye on it, if anything changes, we'll let you know." So people can go back into a bit more relaxed, regular posture. That's where again you've got to develop relationships, you've got a lot of different tools that state and locals are using to keep intelligence and law enforcement sensitive information going back and forth to each other. That didn't happen before, you didn't have that framework. Those were all capacities that were built with time.

PK: Yes, because one of the things that people didn't realize about the system is that you can't, effectively it's a synonym for all the meetings that Tom Ridge is having, and all the intelligence that he's receiving, and all the chatter that people are getting, and you can't send that all, you have to package it somehow, is what I'm saying. You have to package it somehow.

RC: And there are intelligence bulletins that go out on literally a twice a day basis, between the morning and the evening to let people know what is happening. Those are, the president gets his daily brief about what's happening across the planet, between natural disasters and then people who are out to create unmitigated disasters, of whatever that might be, so when he gets his intelligence brief, his daily intelligence brief, the DIB, places that we may never have heard of may be on his radar, you know, that people don't necessarily know about. It does come down to a human judgment on what you're going to do on all of these things, and we, as human beings, are an imperfect species, we make wrong decisions between right and wrong one way or the other.

PK: Yes, and on that note, Bush gets that memo, famously, "Bin Ladin determined to strike in the US" memo that goes around, maybe a couple of months before 9/11, but, I can well imagine that he's getting dozens of those in a week. One of them is bound to...

RC: I've worked at NASA for years and there were people that warned of debris strikes on the leading edge of the shuttle, countless missions. You can play Chicken Little all you want, one day, you're going to be right. It comes down to understanding and mitigating those risks, and what is your threshold of tolerance, and Michael Chertoff, who I have great reverence and respect for, I think he did a wonderful job of describing and putting risk in context for the department and the nation about, look, there's no such thing as 100% security. You want me to guarantee everything's going to be perfect. I can't guarantee that. Anyone that's going to guarantee it's perfect is blowing sunshine. I can't tell you it's going to rain tomorrow morning. I hope it doesn't, because my son is going to be camping with some Boy Scouts, but I can't guarantee you that. There are no guarantees.

PK: To what extent does this feed into modern society, risk society, whatever you want to call it, has this, "we don't have to tolerate this". Especially in America, for historical reasons we've been discussing, people don't feel they have to put up with...

RC: No, they want their MTC, their power goes out because of a storm or something; they all of a sudden start calling the power utility, berating them.

PK: Right, let alone the inconvenience of a terrorist attack, the inconvenience of a power cut, or their favorite show going off air. So to what extent does the kind of challenge that DHS faces, is just part of the modern world.

RC: It's building, this is going to be a multi-generation bid of building a culture of resilience, building a culture of preparedness, and that is something that is going to have to, and I see it going on now in places, here in the United States, one of the things that was done to better educate and prepare families to get smoke detectors in their homes, were programs. The Fire Department would go to local schools and they would teach kids that if there's a fire, what number do you call? I'll dial 9/11. Well, if there's a fire, do you know where you're supposed to go in your house. Well, no. And they give kids a brief sheet that says, draw your house, create a meeting place, is it the mail box, is it the tree by the driveway, you need to come up with a plan, so that kids were literally going home, saying to their parents we had the fireman come today, they brought their truck, they let me hold the hose, I got to hold the axe, I wore the hat, dad. Hey dad, where do we go in the midst of a fire? Any parent who has a child that suddenly comes to them to ask what is really a mortality question. Parents are going to take a little bit of a deep breath to say, "you know what, if we ever have a fire I need you to go to the neighbor's house. I need you to run, we'll all come together, and we'll all go to the next door neighbor's house." And it gives, one, the child a sense of comfort that they know what to do, and it also gives the parent a sense of comfort to know that their kid knows what to do. If there's an issue, if they have difficulty getting out. It's building those things from grassroots up. The other thing I think DHS, under Ridge, Chertoff and Napolitano, have done a number of efforts to educate people on readiness and preparedness etcetera, whether they've partnered with the American Red Cross, or the Ad Council, or commercial retailers like WalMart, or anything like that, that put advertisements up, whether they be billboards, or in stores, or in magazines. We have made, we have put so much information out there for people to be ready. I mean, if you go to ready "dot" gov, which I had helped put together, the private sector piece of it. You know, look, all those tools are there, ignorance should not be an excuse to anything, because we've made the information free, available and accessible. We've made it available in multiple languages, whether from Spanish to Portuguese. I don't know whether they had Portuguese. Certainly in New York, they've taken that information and put that readiness in any number of languages.

PK: Yes, I guess it's just an incredibly fine balance because you can well imagine, slightly more that your kid learns at school, and they come back, and you're, well, you're scaring my child, it's fear-mongering. A small amount, good, too much...

RC: You know, we're all a risk averse people and we all want to recognize and want to feel our kids are safe and warm and protected, and all that, and that's great, but there also comes down to, you've also got to be candid and honest with your child about, you know, the world's tough out there. And there comes a point where you're going to have to know

what to do in a given situation. And that's where, I've long sort of used the term, and it would ruffle some feathers, I call this new Darwinism. This goes to adaptation and survival of the species, that, you know, those who take in and adapt will evolve. Those that don't risk extinction. You get the choice, it's up to you what you want to do. And so, again, color-code system is one of those things that was a rudimentary tool at the beginning that has since evolved to where it's at right now and it evolved based upon hard knocks, painful lessons, public ridicule, necessary deployment, debatable deployment, all of those things, it's all part of the larger history that talks about that evolution. I'm glad we don't have a color-code alert. I'm glad we don't have the system that Ridge talked about in November, 2001. If we did, that would show that we've done no critical thinking, that we've not listened to anybody about its utilization. We've taken all those lessons learned and applied them. I wouldn't want to be on the same airplane that the Wright brothers flew. That tool was a starting tool. It is evolved to be what is now the Boeing Dreamliner; which is a state-of-the-art aircraft.

PK: So, in that sense, you'd say that you have to look at the context that it was in. So, there's point plucking, in 2002, plucking that system out and looking at it now in the cold light of day ten years after 9/11? And thinking, well that's preposterous, just in the same way that the Wright brothers plane would look ludicrous now, but of its time...

RC: It's funny, where I watch an older movie or something, with my kids or something, and they'll see, I think it was Ghostbusters, and my youngest made a comment about, "hey dad, why don't they just take a picture with their cellphone?" And my wife and I looked at each other and said, "a cellphone? This is 1984. They didn't have that. And so you have to look at the historical context of what it's in, what the environment was like; I mean, Bush was breathing down Ridge's neck, the public were breathing down Bush's neck, they just had 3,000 people murdered, live on television, kept forever in posterity, and by God, something needed to be done about it. So you got to do something, and you don't have all the answers, so you come up with what was, the tool they had at the time.

PK: And to a certain extent, I think one of the problems is people look at that color-coded matrix as the whole system, which it wasn't, it had all the associated protective measures, the guidelines, and these kinds of things. But that became, it was almost too good an icon if you see what I mean, because...

RC: It became the one moment everybody focused on, but no one looked at the subsequent versions that subsequently came out and thought it was that way. Again, we changed the rules and the application of it and what it meant for different industries over time. And the reason was, we better understood what the implications were and all that, we better understood the industries. And part of that occurred not only in real environments, it had to be changed, but also during what I will call the TOPOFF, the Top Officials exercise, where you utilize the color-code system as part of the Top Officials exercise, TOPOFF three, where there was a simulation of a plague attack in New Jersey, and the then acting governor or New Jersey decided, "Well, I'm the leader of the state, I'm going to be pragmatic, I'm going to go to Code Red; I'm going to protect my people." Code Red, by going to Code Red meant, all the airports shut down, all the ports shut down, the bridges were shut down, the tunnels were shut down, no one was getting in; no one was getting out. Okay, congratulations governor, you've now created an island. No pharmaceuticals and medical supplies were able to get in here, short of a military air lift nothing else is coming in here, pharmaceuticals with which to deal with people, oh, by the way, what are you going to do about chlorine coming in here to deal with the water treatment plants, oh, by the way, what are you going to do about fuel supplies that are sitting off Port Elizabeth right now, and people are going to run out of gas, oh, by the way, what are you going to do when they start running out of groceries? And the governor, all of a sudden, was like, "oh, I didn't know Code Red..."

PK: Let's go to Code Orange now!

RC: So I made the joke, I was sitting there in the meeting, so are we going to go from a Merlot red, or go to a sort of Chablis blush? And we had some kind of fun with the exercise with it, and, it was sort of like, we're going to go to a kind of, almost orange,

maybe, so it was red lite, we had kind of jokingly said, but until you had gone through the exercise, and you saw what the ramifications of those decisions would be, people didn't understand them.

PK: But, I mean, if that was what happened at Code Red, Code Red is really just for, there is an attack in progress, or imminent, we're certain.

RC: It is basically, we're in progress. And under way and all of that. Yes.

[...]

RC: Well, when you have all of that. And again, I sort of describe the creation of DHS like Frankenstein, they took a lot of body parts, they sewed them together, hit it with a bolt of lightning and when the monster stood up and stumbled and kind of corralled and all the organ transplants didn't necessarily work, people were angry. When anyone does an organ transplant, there are some anti-rejection drugs, and a recovery period, that's why I'm always cautious of, that they needed to better appreciate what the circumstances were, of what Ridge did in assembling this, and what Chertoff did taking it to the next level, and what Napolitano has done, and again, things are a whole lot more better, but there are still lots of areas where there's lots of work that needs to be done...

#### *9.4.6 John Fenzel*

Philip Kirby: If you could just tell me, in your own words, what your involvement has been with the HSAS? When it started, when it finished?

John Fenzel: Well, you know the way the Homeland Security Advisory System started was after the attacks of September 11<sup>th</sup> in 2001. I was working, at the time, as the staff director for Governor Ridge it what was then called the Office of Homeland Security, which subsequently became the Homeland Security Advisory Council. And if you remember, during the time between September 11<sup>th</sup> and December 2001, there were a number of different threats that arose.

PK: Anthrax was around then.

JF: Yes, and at the time, the FBI director Mueller and then our attorney general, John Ashcroft, both were assigned the task of alerting the American public to threats that existed. Both of them, it was not their favourite thing to do, I can tell you. They did it, and they obviously had to coach all of the, the way that they conveyed these threats, in an unclassified way. Usually it was in the press briefing room at the White House. And then Governor Ridge came in as the Homeland Security advisor and then that responsibility was turned over to him. And then in December of 2001 a number of very serious, high level and imminent threats were being reported and he was the one who was tasked to actually stand in the press briefing room, describe the threat, with no context beyond what was known about it and to talk about it. And so he was subject to a lot of questioning by the media. I think all of those transcripts would be available if you Googled them. And he, during one of those briefings he returned visibly frustrated because it was difficult to describe some of these threats in an easily understandable way and without being able to provide the full contexts of those briefs. And so I told him at that point, as we went into his office, Sir we will develop a public warning system for you. It will be a good one, and we'll start on it right away and hopefully have it finished for you in a couple of months. And he looked at me and he said "you will?", and I said "Yes, we will, and I'll stay in touch with you and make contact with you as we go through this". And so that's we did. I literally began with a very rough draft of a system without really having anything to go by and at the time on the, I believe I was back in my parent's home in Chicago and working on their home computer, lots of notes. And returned after the holidays and we then began an inter-agency process with all the federal departments and agencies, representatives, at kind of a policy coordination group level and we talked about what would be the actual deliverable for creating a system, a good system of public warning. And so at the time we all agreed, the discussion at the time was what would be the ultimate deliverable to actually make a system like this occur. And to create a system that would be effective. And initially we talked about an executive order, but then, I think, we all settled on the idea of

a Homeland Security Presidential Directive, and so to fast forward quite a bit the ultimate deliverable for this was Homeland Security Presidential Directive Three and that really was the kind of legal methodology through which we were able to come up with a system of public warning; the first one in the United States.

PK: That's very interesting, thank you. If I can just pick up on a couple of points there, one of which you mentioned that it was aimed at the public even from the outset. In some of the other reading I've been looking at, in some of the literature, it says that initially it was designed for a federal level.

JF: There's a lot of different nuances to this. It was meant for the public, but when I say the public, it's not just the citizenry, it's also industries, the federal departments and agencies, it's the states, it's the local governments and so it was designed not as a federal system, but as a national system and that's the key distinction to make. And that was a key distinction that Governor Ridge made in announcing the system.

PK: From what you said there, it sounds very much like it came out of the emotional moment of 9/11, and suddenly you're in this, I think especially in America it was the first attack on the homeland, whereas in Britain we had, for example, the Blitz and things like this, a bit more a culture shock. So did it come out of that 9/11 moment.

JF: Well, I think that there's a good case to be made that without the events of September 11<sup>th</sup>, 2001, that we may not have a public warning system in place today and so it was certainly the catalyst for the creation of a system of public warning. Importantly, the Homeland Security Advisory System was only one element of what was originally intended. It was a multi-component system; multiple information systems were also drafted and executed. How do you share information with states and with local governments, municipalities? And so especially with the information that's classified and the secret or top-secret level and so we developed a system that would allow us to, we called it at the time a tier-line, where you would have a classified report with information and sources that you could not share with the public. But still, nonetheless, you had information that was important to convey to governors or to mayors or to CEOs of industries or to individuals. How do you do that when those individuals may not necessarily have a security clearance? And so that's why we developed that system as well. With this public warning system, the colour coded alert system as it's become known; it was intended all along to have much more depth than what's typically seen just in HSPD-3.

PK: Okay, so that's interesting. Why did it remain at the level? Why didn't we get the greater depth?

JF: Well there's a lot of theories to that. I can tell you, as a person that shepherded this system all the way through from beginning to end some frustration. And the frustration was that it was never used by leadership, our national leadership, in the way that it was intended. And Governor Ridge and I'm sure you can find some of the transcripts, where he claims it was used for political ends. By raising a threat level and doing it in a very public way, there may be a correlation to a bump in political polling. That certainly happened and I think that it did a vast disservice to the system, but also to the nation as well.

PK: I agree with that. From looking at its chronological perspective, at the outset there seems to be a lot of productive talk about it, but when it gets into these later areas where there's speculation that its being used for, like you say, a bump in the polls, just before an election or something like that, then it loses its credibility after that.

JF: Well there's a lot of things that lose credibility when you get closer to political election, regardless of what system you are referring to, but it is very short sighted, because in that regard it really reduced the overall credibility of the system as an effective means of warning, when it should have been apolitical along and I know that Governor Ridge fought against the tendency to raise a threat level without having information that was credible, that was specific, that was corroborated, and without an imminent threat.

PK: Sure, because there was a lot of controversy over Governor Ridge's book, when it came out, that was on the cover, he was saying that there had been these kinds of debates. Just a little more getting into the nitty-gritty of it: why were colours deemed to be the best way to transmit the message?

JF: It's funny because that was not my idea, that was one of my colleagues, he was a senior director, his name is Mike Byrne, he's a former fireman and wonderful expert in all things related to homeland security and as we developed this. I originally did not have colours associated with any of the different threat levels, conditions, whatever you want to call them. Instead, they were just descriptors, low, guarded, elevated, high, severe, and then Mike said "John, you've really got to add colours to this." And the funny exchange here was I said "Well Mike, I'm colour-blind and there are an awful lot of other people that are, as well." And he said, "Yeah, but you've got to do it." And so we added the concept of colours to this and it stuck. And the interesting thing is that, as you might imagine, a lot of those colours changed, because how do you associate colours with an actual threat condition, or a threat level, and there's one story as well that I can tell you. Even after we had come up with the final colours for the system, I think it was green, not blue, but there was yellow, orange, red, it might have been brown, I'm not sure, it was actually President Bush, the day before the system was released, he changed guarded to blue so that he could fool the press, the day before it was released.

PK: Okay, so he kept it a secret a bit. Well interestingly, there's a system over in Britain that we have, which is a terror threat one as well, which also uses colour, I think that was introduced in 1970s and that also has colour as a gradation. So just moving on a little bit to the popular reception of it, so some of the earliest ways that it was tackled were your Jon Stewarts and your Saturday Night Live sorts of commentaries, how did that go down in the, amongst the guys that created it and yourself.

JF: We expected it. And in fact it was fully predicted that the first thing that would happen was that the System, because of the colours, would come up on the Tonight Show, Jay Leno would have all the jokes about M&Ms and everything else and we had briefed that to all the leadership as well. But there was a need seen, nonetheless, to include the colours in the system. And really, what we wanted, the overall objective in creating the Homeland Security Advisory System, was a system that was easily understood. That was easily conveyed, and that was multi-layered. And would apply not only to individuals but also to various industries and that could easily be isolated to a specific industry. So if there was a threat to a rail system on the East Coast, you could raise the threat condition to orange or high for that particular rail line while keeping the rest of the rail system throughout the United States yellow or elevated, or guarded.

PK: Yes, those sector specific warnings came in a little bit later didn't they? So the original...

JF: They started to; one of the difficulties that we had talked about early on, even before the system was created was that just by initiating shot-gun blast warnings, would be both expensive, cumbersome and would not be very effective. And fortunately, despite what you get in the full text of HSPD-3, it was not used the way that it had been described. And I think that you could contribute that to just the first time that a system had ever been used, had ever been employed in the United States. We had no real experience in doing this and even if you look at other alert systems, like the Amber Alert system, and any others, even those were pretty young. And so this was really one of the first experiences that the United States had in dealing with how to employ effectively a warning system.

PK: Yes. Like I say, there's a slightly bigger back history of these things in Britain, but there is a kind of culture of threat levels in the US. I'm thinking of the hurricane levels and those kinds of things.

JF: Well, you definitely have the weather systems and there's lots of other systems, but as far as an actual alert system, this was the first time, and that's not to say that we didn't look at the weather systems that were out there, we certainly did and we tried to gain as



much as possible the lessons that we learned from those. And also there is a psychological dimension to this that we really, that we did a deep dive into. How would people react psychologically to an elevated alert level?

PK: Was there always an interest in how people would react then, and the kind of affect it would have on different people? Was that taken into account?

JF: One of the systems, one of the best sources of information there, actually comes out of Israel. It's a common place occurrence to deal with higher alerts, alarms and what not, because of the situation that they face every day.

PK: Just building on that, in the Israeli example as well, was part of the reason for the system just to get people in the right frame of mind? Just being prepared? As much as anything about specific threats, to get them prepared, to say look there's a danger out there and we've got to be aware of it.

JF: Sorry what was the question?

PK: Well, although the system related to specific threats, and the colours get changed. Having the alert level never lower than yellow, was part of the reason for that keeping people alert, keeping people aware?

JF: Well my own belief, and this is just my personal opinion, is that it was a mistake to keep the level at yellow, because it didn't do anyone a service, everybody became accustomed to elevated or yellow level, as being the new normal, and a fact I think we all knew well, certainly nationally, if you look at the threat information that comes it, we're not always at an elevated level, but of course in the post-9/11 world that was a perception that was perpetuated. And, of course, now with the new system, that has recently been announced, they've diminished those levels to just three, if I'm not mistaken.

PK: I think it might even be two.

JF: Two, yes, I think it's two, definitely. So you have to look at what is effective and even be in a situation now where people, do they really care? I think that ultimately you can argue that they will care about the next emergency, and how do you make these public warning announcements, and how do you handle warning when you actually have active threats in play.

PK: It's tricky to get that balance between alerting the general population...

JF: It is, and it's not something that, all along I've always been a big advocate of changing the system, having it evolve, certainly any system should change with the times, and the Homeland Security Advisory System didn't change for eight or nine years, until this new system was announced, and now you don't really hear anything about it and I don't think that any, if you look at the way that it's been described, it hasn't really been executed the way that it was meant to either and so I think that my argument would be, you need somebody, if you have a homeland security effort, you need somebody who's in charge of it, who actually, at least a commission, that determines what the threats are, if they meet all those different criteria, of corroborated, and what the consequences would be, how credible it would be. And then actually deciding with the national leadership what should be the threat condition that is described to the American public, or to an industry sector

PK: Were there specific guidelines for what an orange alert would be, so to speak. So what kind of information would have resulted in an orange alert as opposed to not changing?

JF: Well we tried, at least in a broad way, to define within HSPD what would constitute an elevated condition and a guarded condition and with all the colours, and so if you be to HSPD-3's text, you'll see that, so yellow, increased surveillance at critical locations, and on and on, but really the thing that matters is what is relevant, specifically relevant to families, what's relevant to individuals, and furthermore what are the protective measures, what should an individual do if there's a threat to an area that they are

occupying, or that they are living, or an industry in a particular area, and you really have to be very specific, and it has to be tailored to the condition that exists. And you can't just take a broad swath of threat information, and say "here you go", you actually, it requires a certain amount of leadership and good management, good communication skills to be able to say here is the situation, here's how it applies to you, here is what we are advising you to do in the wake of this threat information. And I think that we still have a lot to improve upon in that regard.

PK: So that lack of specific information feeds into what you were saying about there being a lack of evolution about it.

JF: Yes.

PK: So, to get to how it was meant to be communicated to people, so it was always going to be through media stations and news channels? That was always how it was going to be communicated?

JF: Well, you're touching on something else that deals with the evolution of the system as well, or the lack thereof. The way that, the threat condition, once a threat condition was actually determined to rise, or to be lowered, ultimately there are a number of agencies and departments that would be involved in that. You've got the Central Intelligence Agency, the attorney general, and then also you have the executive office of the president, but ultimately you have for a specific decision, for instance to go to a red or severe level, that would require the president's approval, if I'm not mistaken. It's been a while since I've looked at this, but how it's communicated would be through the means you just mentioned, through television, through radio, and possibly through email alerts, but even email at that time was somewhat young. If you really look at it in the broader context. But what was never incorporated into this, even as time marched on, was the use of social media, you know like Facebook and Twitter and all the other means that have become common place now and still we haven't really incorporated it to the extent that we could and also the use of text messaging and lots of other different methodologies. But really the challenge of public warning is to ensure the widest dissemination of that information for the affected areas, and for the individuals, so that they can protect both life and property to the extent that they possibly can. But also, to enhance vigilance in certain areas, particular when you're talking about a man-made threat, not a weather threat, that requires people to be on guard.

PK: It's interesting that you mention social media there because the NTAS does have a Facebook page and it has got involved with all those kinds of things.

JF: I haven't looked at it lately, but the last time that I did look at it, it really wasn't being used to an effective extent. I think it gets to the whole premise of have a specific office, or at least a mission that is responsible for conveying that information and for, there has been a number of instances where the threats are definitely real, as conveyed in the media, but essentially ignored by the Department of Homeland Security.

PK: Sure, I just want to get an idea of how this happened. So, initially, it was news tickers and things like this a lot, but that gradually tailed off?

JF: It always, it was always there. The place where you would see it the most were in airports and train stations and I would ask sometimes, with the Secret Service and several others, how does this system work for you? For different corporations, I would ask the CEOs. And they would say, "It's definitely something we pay attention to," but getting back to the level, "we're always at a yellow, when we really start paying attention is when we move to an orange high, or red severe, and that's when we really start paying attention, we start asking questions, and it's at that point that we really do depend on the advice and the council given by both municipal, state and federal authorities."

PK: Sure. At the airports I've always wondered. They put out those boards that would say we're at yellow alert, but because it never went below yellow alert did they even have boards that would say we're at green alert, we're at blue alert?

JF: They actually raised, if I'm not mistaken, they raised the aviation, the air travel to orange.

PK: I think you're right.

JF: And they kept it there for a long time, to the extent that I think it really became meaningless. And that's not to say that there weren't active threats, but if you're going to raise a level to orange or high, or to red severe, you really ought to have specific information for specific airports. And there wasn't that level of specificity supplied.

PK: Yes. The idea of "the boy who cried wolf", or Chicken Little, comes up quite a bit in the literature, just because it stagnated a bit.

JF: Well, we always knew that that was going to be a risk. And that's why, as you read HSPD-3, you can see that the system was designed to be very specific, it was designed to be flexible, targeted specifically, but it was, but that was never applied and so really I think that the overall argument here, if you look at the overall intent of the program, where it probably failed, where it did fail, was it wasn't ever executed and managed the way that it was originally intended to.

PK: That's very interesting because I've obviously been reading a lot of the good points about it and a lot of the bad points about it, but from what you're saying, nearly all the criticisms that were ever made of it, you had presaged before it had even been implemented.

JF: Well, we did. And we also tried to incorporate a lot of that into the text of the creation of the system and so, as you proceed along with your thesis, what I would really encourage you to do is read very closely what HSPD-3 says, because it does try to address how these events, these threats would be actively managed and we were very careful in doing that, and there was a lot of debate, this was not an easy directive to write or system to create, and we've learned an awful lot of lessons. One of the things, I read all the criticisms of the system over the whole time that it was in effect, and I was asked the question, by all means let's change it, let's let it evolve, but if you want to change the system, tell me what it is we should do, and really it was a function of trying to get people to work together to say let's constructively create a system that does work, that people do listen to, and that it is relevant to them, and that really, I would argue that that hasn't occurred. And it's something that is really one of the active cornerstones of any homeland security effort writ large.

PK: Obviously you were involved at the very inception of the system, so why wasn't it evolving, because you weren't really involved in it in the later years?

JF: Well, I don't know entirely, I think it just became a background system that was there and that everybody knew about, but I'm not sure, I still can't tell you who was overall responsible for it, except for maybe the Department of Homeland Security, but there's lots of different ways that the system could have been far more integrated into existing systems. So you have ready.gov, you have Neighbourhood Watch programmes, you have, as you admit, NOAA, the radar warnings systems, now you have cell-phones. We talked about social media such as Twitter and Facebook. You have got all of the airport, police, first-responder systems and at the end of the day any kind of warning system is a system of information conveyance, how is it that you convey information? If you're using just TV, when nobody's watching TV any more, you're not using the internet, you've got some big issues with your system, because you really have to go where people are living, and they're living on the internet, they're living on texts now, more than ever. And they're living on social media, and so you really have to acquire actively those into your system. I would also argue that any system shouldn't be reactive. It should also be able to prevent and to mitigate threats, or attacks, and it should also be able to pre-empt them, too, which is somewhat of a controversial dimension, at least that's kind of where I'm at with it.

PK: Yes, I've got an iPad. And I've got an app that has the HSAS on it, and obviously it's not updating any more, but you can go on your iPad and these kinds of things. So that sounds like the kind of thing that you thought would have been a good idea.

JF: Sure. And you know, and also people, it's not something, why for instance shouldn't we, as a government, go to Apple, or go to Samsung, or any of the makers of these telephones or the iPads and say you will incorporate a method, whether it's an app, or an alert, a functionality of the phone or your tablet. That if there's a threat, it automatically comes up, and it gives you the level, it also gives you the protective measures, it tells you what to do in a given situation. If you're in a specific area, you would receive that alert for instance, and that can even be applied for weather warnings and what not, but I do think that there is a big difference between weather warnings and terror warnings, because weather warnings are things that happen to a large extent, in many respects they're somewhat predictable whereas man-made threats are manipulated by human-beings with brains of their own, and who have the ability to react and respond in unpredictable ways.

PK: Something I'm very interested in about the HSAS is how it became an icon in a lot of ways. So, you get it on t-shirts and these kinds of things, and *24*, the television series, it kind of becomes a visual motif in that. Is that something that you've noticed about it? That is has that kind of iconic status now?

JF: I did see it on *24*, and I have seen it on t-shirts and coffee cups and the funny thing I can tell you about that design, was that, it was done with me and a graphic designer who I had brought on, because we just needed help, and I think he did a brilliant job, there were a lot of different thoughts about how it should look, and because a linear system of levels was really the overall construct, we created that colour-coded ladder, that you're referring to, and it was modified a little bit by the White House, prior to release, but that became the kind of symbol, and whether the symbol was something that was constructive, I don't know, but to an extent, because of the post-9/11 world that we live in, it was inevitable.

PK: What were these modifications that the White House made?

JF: Oh they were small. I think the overall system, they provided more depth to the graphics, so they became more of a 3-D, you get more of a 3-D feel to it. But overall, what we submitted is the one that you see right now.

PK: And there was a graphic designer that got involved in that as well?

JF: Yes.

PK: You don't have his name, do you?

JF: His name is Bill Davis.

[...]

PK: Yes, TV shows, novels, these kinds of things. They seem to be a big way, over in Britain as well, of discussing foreign policy agendas.

JF: Well, I think that whatever systems you create are inevitably going to become the background of the discussion. And they also have an equal opportunity be misused and manipulated in ways that they were never designed to, toward people's own ends, whether or not they're selfish or not, and in that process you're also going to have the entertainment industry take those on as symbols, because they're trying to convey a story through visual ways, and you'll never hear a show like *24*, for instance, talk about HSPD-3, instead they will show you the poster, they're never going to tell you about the information initiatives, or how information is conveyed, as I mentioned to you, to those that don't have security clearances, but instead there is talk about top secret material as if it was never an issue, and so what's missed in all of that are the finer details of how information is conveyed and also the realities of the challenges that exist in trying to warn the public, whether it's individuals and mass throughout the country, or whether it's in a

small, very targeted area, and how do you get towards people who are maybe not in cities but are in a very isolated, rural area. And they have a threat constructed towards them. And so you have to warn in different ways, it has to be tiered approach that in many cases in the entertainment arena those nuances are glossed over.

PK: Sure, I agree. But I think it also shows the power of the image; of that HSAS, as a symbol, because it was picked up in so many different media and used in an iconic status.

JF: Well, I think that became something of symbol, I think you can argue whether or not that was a healthy thing or not, maybe it was because of, because it was something that people readily recognised, even though the system itself was denigrated. If we ever went to red, people would react to that, corporations would react to that, sectors would react to that, and so you would just have to be able to. But if you keep that level at red, then you're going to condition people to say that is the new normal, and then exactly what happened is what occurred in this case, and that's we boiled ourselves down to just two levels that may or may not be entirely relevant to us.

PK: On the evolution of the system as well, I think I read that New York State adapted it slightly, and so did Hawaii. Hawaii added a black level, for attack under way.

JF: Yes, each state had the ability to create their own systems. We had encouraged, we talked to all of the states, and we briefed them as we were creating the advisory system and they all agreed that this was something that would be useful to them, but we said in order for it to be able to work well, it had to be synchronised and that, we also gave them the option to modify it if it worked for them, and so that was an indicator of how flexible the system was. It wasn't something we were dictating to the states, we asked them to help us with, to co-operate with, and they all did, which was really an amazing feat. I mean if you look at it, how many issues are there where all the states are agreed to a given policy?

#### *9.4.7 Amy Franceschini*

Philip Kirby: So where did the idea for the Homeland Security Blanket come from, then?

Amy Franceschini: So it came from basically when they invaded Iraq, and there was a huge uproar in San Francisco and I was involved in three days of demonstration and protest and I don't think I'd ever seen the city so radicalised. The streets were filled; there were helicopters, for three days straight, in ways that I had never been part of. They had strategies on how to kind of break groups up, avoid helicopters viewing and it was all so scary, like the city was really a different place, and the sound of helicopters really got to me. And I had to get out of the city. And then shortly thereafter there were signs of the homeland security department becoming big and strong and I'd gotten, I think the thing that really inspired me was I'd gotten a letter from the Department of Homeland Security that said, it was warning us what kind of mail to accept and actually a whole bunch of things of what to be fearful of.

PK: This was all the Anthrax stuff?

AF: It wasn't included in this, this was all like "beware of your neighbours, if someone looks like this or acts like this report them to homeland security, if you receive a letter that's handwritten." And they had a picture of a letter that was scribbled, which is what all letters look like! Be cautious and report this to the homeland security department and don't open it. It might have been around Anthrax, but it was more generally all things to be fearful of. And then they entered the coded threat level program that they were going to start, and it was like "this is ridiculous", and my first reaction was this kind of anger and cynicism. And what I wanted to do in reaction was send out parcels to American citizens that were the Homeland Security Blankets. And if I'd have had money, I'd have loved to have done that and I feel like people would probably have used them. Here there was such a buy-in to this idea of fear and the homeland security department was going to protect us and I wanted to. And so a local gallery organised, quickly organised an exhibition called "no war" and over 60 artists were in it, and it was probably two weeks

after the United States invaded Iraq, maybe it was like 8 months after, that's right, I'm not sure that happened right away, probably eight months after because in September we were like, "wow, it's almost been a year since the United States invaded Iraq and this ridiculous, let's have a show about it called no war." And so I made that for that show.

PK: And how, there's a little bit on the internet, but how does it function exactly?

AF: So that is like a prototype, it's basically a symbolic work and the idea was if we had funding we would have connected it to the internet, and you can basically, if that threat level was to change you could stream that data and your blanket could heat up or cool down based on that data. But it's interesting, again, because it wasn't connected to the internet and it was just a sculpture, how much people, how much was implied in, like people really think it works, and they really think that sculpture can be taken home and plugged in. And I think that's interesting in terms of the perceived protection that the homeland security department is offering, where I really think that a lot of their messaging and their; it just seemed like there was an alignment between how much we trust the things that surround us, or in this, the systems that govern us.

PK: So there's a lot of stuff that I've been reading about outright satire on the system, Jon Stewart and *Saturday Night Live*, and these kinds of people, but artistic contributions like your own, that's a subtler critique as well. I think there's still an element of satire there, but were you trying to do something a little more subtle there, because it often falls into the people are for it, or people are mocking it, but interpreting it through art I think has a bit more a subtle message.

AF: Yes, I feel like that piece can be a one-liner, really quickly. But I think that what, like I said earlier, what became interesting was, I actually did want to connect it to the Internet, and have this blanket heating up and cooling down, but it was interesting how much people really projected into it without really having it, the dynamic based in the sculpture, that I felt that was interesting in and of itself. It had enough signalling in terms of the language, the form as an object, that it didn't need to be alive.

PK: Yes, and the colour-coded system itself, I think you were talking about it earlier in saying that there was a climate of anxiety around and the system gets introduced and exacerbates that, but as an artist was it more just an icon than an actual practical tool?

AF: Yes, definitely.

PK: Because a lot of the stuff I see about it, you see it on *24*, the television series, and movies and things like that, but actually, as a warning system, you see very little about it.

AF: Yes.

PK: So would you say it became more of an icon, and something that people could rebel against, than actually any kind of practical usage?

AF: I think it became partially a, I feel like it became almost a comic relief.

PK: Okay, from the wider war on terror?

AF: Yes, and it brought up, it just kind of highlighted the ridiculousness of this idea of what security is. And you know when people started to think about it how ridiculous would this be if I actually slept at night with this blanket. Put myself in a place, like the most vulnerable place I can be is asleep at night, and I trust this blanket to get us back out, the ridiculousness and the absurdity of it was just trying to parallel that letter that I had gotten earlier. And also to offer a sense of comic relief, I mean that's not really where it began to come from. I think there was sort of a sense of irony and cynicism immediately when I read that letter that was imparted to it.

PK: Yes, it's interesting. From my reading the system inspires a lot of different reactions, there's a lot of official, official if you can call it that, criticism of it, but as well it just gets

this whole artistic and satirical movement that are thinking about it as well. I mean what is it that's so funny about it; is it the colours itself? Or is it more the philosophy that's behind it?

AF: I think it's the philosophy that's behind it. I think it's also the fact that it never changes. There's really no criteria for why it's orange, or why it's green. I mean, there's supposed to be some criteria, but what are the nuances of that? It's been orange for a long time. Psychologically what does it mean if it goes to red? Then red is going to be meaningless. I don't know if it's even gone down to green, I can't remember.

#### *9.4.8 Ze Frank*

Philip Kirby: Where did the idea, then, for the "red alert" film come from?

Ze Frank: So, "red alert" was actually, I created it, I ran a film festival in New York called Bay 60, which required that people create a new film every sixty days, the theme was red alert. So I kind of like tumbled into it a little bit, that was in kind of post-9/11 New York, all of us were very sceptical of the government and what Bush was doing.

PK: Why were you sceptical?

ZF: Well not all of us, obviously. I'm a liberal orientation and the initial assault on Afghanistan and Iraq, for my eyes, was just sort of riddled and riddled with lots of errors. So the handling of, so the idea of terror, just to begin with, and the influence that terror has on a population, became like a super important thing for me and specifically, you know, the power of a terrorist attack, really comes from the influence that this is allowed to have on a population, and the response that the government has specifically. So a lot of this is like standard, stock Orwellian stuff. But then a lot of this, for me, ended up being about mythology and the creation of mythology. Where irrational life intersects with the mythology created by these attacks and the response to that; so a terrorist attack, you know if you just look at it purely and statistically, how likely are you to be affected by it, in a very direct way, is very, very miniscule. When you look at like the proportional response that we have as a culture to that kind of thing, something's a little bit out of line, and a lot of it comes from this, comes from, I don't know if it would be fair to call it a mythology, but some sort of a shadowy, vague perception of threat. And worse than that is that I think psychologically we're geared to take a lot more offence, and be affected a lot more deeply by the idea that there's an actual actor out there that's bad, and has a threat against us, and so it starts weaving this very, very deep and terrible thread into society.

PK: Yes. So in that sense then was the colour-coded system kind of feeding into this mythology idea that you've got, that it was more of an icon than anything else, more than a practical system it was an icon.

ZF: Well, certainly. There was absolutely no doubt that that was exactly what it was. The initial, when it was initially released there was so little information about what, essentially, the public should do as they follow these threat levels, it got so completely absurd. I did a whole talk on the red alert piece, which had a lot more additional information about how the red cross, for example, had an emergency preparedness guide; had suggestions of what to do at each one of the different levels. It was absolutely absurd. I mean it was kind of like "how much water should you stockpile?" Each one of these levels, it was real madness. It was complete madness. So you got this sense that the colours corresponded to something and the hope of course was that the colours corresponded to some kind of action that was taking place in, you know, the back corners of the Pentagon. And you assume there was a proportionate allocation of resources, and maybe the whole thing might have conjured up some ideas of sentries and people being on watch, but really from the standpoint of a public alert system, it had no meaning. There was nothing associated with it. So all it really seemed to function as was a perpetuation of a kind of fear, and maybe a conspiratorial way. I imagined it as a kind of tool to justify the continuation of the PATRIOT Act, a continuation of acts of violence that were perpetrated against countries that were only in the very loosest ways tied to September 11.

PK: I think that you're right as well, a lot of the similar literature that I've been able to find comes from civil defense and that kind of thing, because the Department of Homeland Security are issuing booklets even now, "how to build shelters", and things like that. So a lot of it really seems to feed more into civil defense than it does anything more recently, Cold War civil defense.

ZF: Right.

PK: So what is it about the system that was so funny? Was it the colours? Was it the philosophy behind it? Was it just that it was kind of pointless? What was so funny about it?

ZF: Well, for me it's a little hard to try and recreate why I thought it was funny. When you create a humour piece, it's a lot like fishing, you sort of fish around before you find something that works. So for me, two things about it that I really liked: and one was that this was an actual branding assignment for a company, and any time that I got into that realm, when you move toward that and is there something ludicrous about it when you think what's happening in reality. And also just to have this character that was potentially, you know, a happy go lucky mid-Western, person who sort of like, didn't really care about the guts of it, it really was just what it was. For me at least there was a little bit of a relief speaking in those voices, I think partially because when you're very frustrated and angry about something, there's a certain amount of traction that you can really get by voicing those, partially a mood thing, people that don't share your opinions literally have a different language. And when you venture into the kind of political realm, points are very, very hard to make. I think it was neutral place, and also a neutral voice and neutral theme that was really resigned allows you to mess around and have fun with it. And that was what was really enjoyable to me, through those two positions to explore how ludicrous everything was. And especially those kind of logos and things like that. It ultimately was a release; I mean I ended up doing in 2006 a whole year of commentary on something called *The Show*.

PK: Yes, I've seen some of it.

ZF: Yes, very often employed a similar tactic which is you move into the subject matter through something banal. And it's almost how by misdirecting the focus on something that's so ordinary and elevating that to a certain status, you can then start dramatically picking apart the thing which just, which I think are just a lot more uncomfortable to tackle.

PK: So in some ways the colour-coded system was a vehicle to critique and satire homeland security more generally?

ZF: Oh without a doubt, yes. There was no question about that; I mean that was the source. It was very focused. I mean like in the broader sense the theme was fear, and the choices that we make living with fear. And I regret, I guess, not being a little more direct on it, but at the time I was just, it was probably the third film I'd ever made.

#### *9.4.9 Dave Lippman*

Philip Kirby: So I'm looking at, as you know the HSAS, the Homeland Security Advisory System, but particularly I'm interested in how it's been picked up by popular culture, and musicians, and artists, and things like this. And especially from a satirical kind of perspective, like you have; so that's where I'm coming from. So I wondered maybe if to start you could just give me a little synopsis about yourself and what you do, please.

Dave Lippman: So what you want is some background?

PK: Yes, just a little bit about yourself to start, if you would.



DL: Yes, I started out as both musician and songwriter, as well as a political activist when I was about fifteen.

PK: Okay.

DL: And they kind of grew in tandem together. And then when I was about thirty, I was a bit bored with committee work, the political things that I was doing, and so I joined a comedy group called the Plutonium Players. And we had briefly a campaign where we ran Ronald Reagan for Shah [of Iran], the world had just lost a Shah, in '79, and we figured there was an opening there and that Reagan was really too slick to be president. And we had what we called the Reagan for Shah campaign. And that was where I began to write comedic things. And that was also the origin of the character, the singing CIA agent, George Shrub, who was named after Bush, who became vice-president at that time. But Bush had been the head of the CIA for a year, earlier on. So at that time I was considered quite radical that the head of the secret police would become the head of the country, but that did eventually happen.

PK: And Bush is one of the few heads of the CIA that ended up in the presidency, isn't he?

DL: Well, rumour goes that he was put in at as head of CIA by the chief of staff for Ford, Gerald Ford, because they were competitors on the sideline, and no one from the CIA had ever been president. And that chief of staff who put him in there, to try and get rid of him, was no less than Donald Rumsfeld.

PK: The same names keeping cropping up, don't they?

DL: Yes, well he was there, I mean those people go back to the Nixon era.

PK: Is there a big kind of culture of this lyrical criticism in the United States? It's pretty big over here, this musical criticism, is it big over there as well?

DL: Well, I'd love to be able to compare, which I can't really, because I haven't been in Britain for, mostly for a long time, but, so I could only compare to a different period and also it depends what you're looking at; if you're looking at big names, or if you're looking at a grassroots movement. Right now, for example, there's a phenomenon of political flash mobs that has come up in the past years or so and these involve mostly parodies and writing of popular tunes, and I've been very involved with that stuff in New York. In fact, we did one on Saturday and on Broadway. We had our Broadway debut! Singing and dancing outdoors, and a connection with a divestment campaign around a very, very large pension fund. Invested in several companies, that are doing various dirty works in Israel and Palestine. And that's become a national if not international campaign. So there was a national flash mob, that is to say it was in three cities and it will be in several more next week. Basically, the same music, so we shared the choreography and the music, things that would have been hard to do with previous technology, but that, very quickly someone makes a video, sends it up, that's a small part of the answer to the question. There are a lot of songwriters who are touching on political things, or who make it their entire content of their act. A number that are doing comedic ones are somewhat smaller. And a number of people who are doing what I do, which is a combination of comedic stand-up act, in character, with songs, is smaller still. But on the other hand, what's really come up in terms of political commentary in the comic vein, is exploded with the twin shows, the two shows *The Daily Show*, and *The Colbert Report*, which has been going on for something like ten years now, and that's a daily diet of comedic political commentary. In fact, there are a lot of young people that get most of their political news from those shows.

PK: Yes, there's a global edition of Jon Stewart's show that is shown over here as well. And they've been, the *Colbert Report*, and the Jon Stewart show, have been some of the biggest satirical ways that the color-coded threat system has been critiqued, as far as I can tell.

DL: Oh yeah, yeah. And forever I'm of course seeing old lines of mine recycled on air.

PK: Oh yeah, example?

DL: Trying to make the effort not to recycle their lines, because it's best if you write your own material. But a lot of this material comes so naturally that many people write the same joke simultaneously. It's better not to watch other comedians when you're getting ready to create. Robin Williams found that out because anything that went in his ears came out his mouth. So he tried to stay out of the comedy clubs so that he wouldn't steal anything by accident.

PK: I guess that must be tricky, mustn't it? Remembering what's your own work and what you've heard elsewhere.

DL: And sometimes if I am sharing the writing, like with these parodies, I don't even remember who wrote what sometimes, a little team writing, or we'll get it from some other city and then I won't remember where it came from.

PK: Yes, you get these big copyright things, where people are arguing other who wrote what.

DL: Yes, you do.

PK: So if I can just go a little more directly onto the system. So just your personal opinion on it to start with, I'd be really interested in.

DL: Colour-coded system?

PK: Yes, the colour-coded system itself.

DL: Well, I think what we gradually came to understand throughout the Bush regime was that it was, they really lucked into this terrorism thing, because they needed an enemy. And communism had pretty well evaporated as anything serious to worry about, if you were prone to worry about such things, around '89, and so in that interim period the world was a little less governed by fear of enemies, but come 2001 that became permanent war, war against everybody and everything; just firing everything and anything. And only now is it beginning to appear that people are a little more rattled by this, in the sense that they see their civil liberties encroached on, when they get patted down and have x-rays of naked bodies in the airports and so forth. But the colour coded alert system was actually the best early example of that, and that's really what it was for. I mean it was said not to be for the use of the public, but only for the use of the people who were in charge of security in various parts of society. However, as it was public knowledge what the colour level was, everybody kind of, it accomplished that extra goal of making everyone turn into sheep. Basically, it's the government, don't get in their way.

PK: So, in some ways it came out of that cultural moment of 9/11, and the war on terror, and these kinds of things?

DL: Yes. And now, it's kind of funny, they've killed Osama bin Laden, and so there's nothing left to fear, but they've got to find something else, so they'll get something. I exaggerate, of course, which is what comedians get paid to do. But there are other, it's obviously a decentralized network. There are people that want to wreak havoc, but there's rarely any talk of our companies and our government wreaking havoc in their countries.

PK: Yes, it's very much similar kinds of debates going on over here. But what is it about the system that's so funny, just in short?

DL: Well I'm not sure that it is.

PK: Okay.

DL: You can find the joke about anything, what I did was basically to compare it up to the thing. You see the Bush government said that you should be afraid and on guard, and as

they say in the New York subway is if you see something, say something, to always be alert and point out anything unusual, enlisting the populous in their ostensible self-defence. But at the same time, Bush said they're not going to get us, they're not going to stop us. They want our freedoms, they want to take our freedoms away, but we're not going to allow that. So I'm urging you to go out and go out there and shop. I'm guessing it was Christmas season right, because it started in September. So it's all Christmas season.

PK: I think one of the most insightful comments that I've got from the track on your CD is that, because Bush does come out and say carry on going shopping. It's okay to mourn for a day, but now we need to get the economy back going. And you picked up on that in the track very well.

DL: Well, that's why I did it like I did, because what is said was. Well, first of all, when they said they wanted our freedoms, meaning I guess that they want us to not have our freedoms, rather than that they wanted them for themselves, because obviously they didn't want freedom. Not only was it a lie, but I turned it around and said what is the fundamental freedom that runs the society according to that ideology, and it is shopping. And he came right out and said it. So, shopping, they're not going to come out and intimidate us, shop. And that, free market fundamentalism, and so it was just one more opportunity, and I think throughout my material you can find references to that. The importance, of how advertising is built into the Bible, and the constitution and all this stuff. The most sacred and patriotic thing that you can do and so forth. And then linking it to how patriotic it is to stop people getting in the way of our oil. And how did our oil get under their sand? No one knows! There's an example of a joke a lot of people wrote at once.

PK: Really?

DL: And it became a bumper sticker, and in the end no one knew where it came from, because everybody had made it up.

PK: So did most people consider it a joke, then? Or was homeland security always considered a joke? Was there always humour running through these things?

DL: No, not particularly. Well, first of all there was this initial moment where everybody pulled together and it's rare that people step out of their lives and help each other. To be selfless in an individualist society, so that was remarked upon. And as a matter of fact, you might remember that a dominant cultural hallmark of the Gen-X, or whoever it was right before then, was irony, that everything was ironic. And that was tied to cynicism, okay. So immediately cynicism was dead, irony was dead, and people were coming to me and saying maybe you won't be able to work anymore. We're less curious. You're not allowed to be sarcastic and a whole lot of things. You'll have to pass, be cynical about what. About the government? That's one thing. About life? That's another. But then that passed, of course, and we were supposed to just go shopping like always and get back to normal. But homeland security, I mean people protested the name, because no one had used that name, the homeland before. It sounded to a lot of people like a Nazi term. It sounded like a war era German term, and maybe it had been used in other countries, but that was the one that people remembered. And so they thought, well this is bad now. Now we're going to have fascism, and we've got the perfect excuse, that everybody is living in fear, and also racism. Considering the thing, the whole thing is a function of the North/South split in the world. And these kinds of countries versus manufacturing and finance countries, and one's white and one's brown, and there we go. But I don't remember it is a topic of derision until later, I don't know when. And this t-shirt came out with a picture of I think Geronimo and some other Indian leaders, with their muskets and their rifles, looking very stern. And it said: "homeland security since 1492".

PK: I'm sure I've seen that somewhere, yes.

DL: And that introduced another element which is, okay, you want to talk about people, countries being under attack, let's do what we never do, let's do history. And let's put the shoe on the other foot. And who was the terrorist then? And it opens up a whole other

discussion. But I don't, I couldn't really tell you that it was the object of comedy, for the simple reason that I can barely remember my own jokes, let alone all the other ones that went around at the time. And Jon Stewart comes a little later. No, he doesn't come later, he's in there already, but I didn't have cable, so I don't know! Actually his show, somebody else had that show for the first couple of years, Craig something, and I never saw it.

PK: Okay, the Daily Show?

DL: And he comes in around 2000, maybe 2001, somewhere around there.

PK: Okay, because it's quite interesting in a way, because we had that same kind of lull over here in the period immediately after 9/11. I think comedy shows were even being pulled from the airwaves, because the mood wasn't there for that kind of humour. And in some ways I kind of think of the HSAS as being one of the first ways that people were able to poke fun at homeland security, because it was kind of innocuous in itself, but people can use it as a vehicle to mock homeland security more generally.

DL: We actually had an ineffectual first leader of it, I think it was. Tom Ridge, former Governor of Pennsylvania, and he kind of flopped all over the place, and so people certainly made fun of that, and said "we're not in very good hands are we". But other than that, there are a small number of sort of officially political comedians around, who have been around forever. Like Will Durst, who's also out of San Francisco where I operated out of for 25 years. And then along came others who included it in their repertoire, like Chris Rock, and then of course a lot of what you had throughout this era. Another kind of form coming up was satirical film, especially Michael Moore, who has tackled so many broad satirical issues, with a different kind of brush. But he used to have a TV show that believe was sponsored, paid for by the BBC.

PK: Oh really?

DL: Because in America, there's nobody here that would do it. He had two different shows and, with outrageous propositions. He had the budget for all kinds of operations. He one time rented a semi-truck, and had it painted red, with a huge hammer and sickle painted on it, and ran it through the American south, just to see what happened.

PK: How did that work out?

DL: I think people were befuddled. It may have been after the period of communism anyway, so it becomes kind of an empty logo, and didn't really scare people or offend them as much. He had a show called *The Awful Truth*, and then he had a different one, I forget before or after that one, and one of them had the BBC behind it. So that's somebody who's explicitly identified with social movements, grassroots movements, as opposed to an entertainment figure like Chris Rock, who knows enough to make some jokes. Or, a slightly more centrist person like Al Franken, who'd been on Saturday Night Live, and ended up as a US senator, and did more mainstream, Democratic, slightly Left humour before he was in politics.

PK: Because there are different kinds of humour. There's the just for laughs kind of stuff. And then there's more the stuff that you do, I think, which has a deeper kind of resonance to it and is actually making a political point.

DL: Yes, and there's a lot of other stuff in the middle. If you look at Richard Pryor, and there a few people like him around today, and it's not that he was political, but he was doing social commentary. So he might be strong in certain areas, like race relations or maybe some stuff around gender; maybe poverty; maybe not, I don't know. But it wasn't like he was commenting of every silly way we got into, or talk about taxing the rich or, he wasn't trying to make a Marxist schematic or something.

PK: And recently they've repealed the system haven't they. And they've brought in a new system.

DL: Yes, a new system.

PK: What are your opinions of that? Is that much better? Is that less funny as an object? What's going on with the new one?

DL: Yes, I haven't tackled it because it's not even in the news. I mean, I could if somebody made me. It's difficult because you've got to prioritise, you've got to have jokes about really funny stuff like melted nuclear plants in Japan, because people expect it more than they expect you to go after a system of alerts that nobody's barely even heard of, that's now elevated and imminent threats, I think, is the two levels they have.

PK: Yes, it's much less exciting this one, isn't it?

DL: Yes, it's not flashy. You know, the whole, see progressive commentary and organising, and then commentary included has become a bit more complex in the age of Obama. Because you've had a series of fits and starts in terms of people's awareness of what's going on. And in fact, fits and starts of what is going on? What is Obama doing? What does he represent? What does the Democratic Party represent? And it's a lot more, you know if you were to go in front of Democratic Party type of audience, you'd find a split right in there of people who are really frustrated and fed up with the administration, and people who are saying no, you'll feed right into the Republicans, and no he's doing his best, and all that, right. And it's a seriously divided liberal community.

PK: Really?

DL: And so if you decided to look at the audience of a person such as myself, who's addressing the anti-war crowd, and then you can add a lot of other issues that the people in my audiences are generally united on, or lean that way. But, if were on the Left, or the Green Party, or a little further, you'd get a different set of impulses, than you'd get from some Democrats, who, you know, the most important thing to them is that Barack Obama gets re-elected. So that if you have Republicans in, it's ever so much worse. Well in some ways it is, and in other ways, it's about the same. So comedy of course relies in general agreement on the point being made. A recognition of it, and feeling at home with it, and feeling that the comedian is speaking for you. And it says something that you've got to stop and think about, whether that's on the mark or not, then that moment of laughing has passed.

PK: I think Obama is much less easy to make fun of, isn't he? Whereas Bush came out with his one-liners, and things like this and was much more easy to mock in that regard.

DL: Well, he had the added advantage of being personally laughable. I actually wrote my Master's thesis on late-night talk-show joke monologues. So that's a conflict of interest in this interview! But the basic thrust of it was that although, because they were daily shows and they were, and this was before there was, and this was just before there was *The Daily Show*. But these were everyday and they were commenting on whatever was in the news, because that's what people had in common, and it was up-to-date. So it didn't have to be political, it could be a dog that went up a tree, or something, but it had to be something in the news, but people always had the feeling that these monologues were political, especially some, like Leno who inherited Carson's penchant for politics, as opposed to Letterman. So I did a study of like five or six of these, and I concluded that they weren't as political as they looked, because actually you couldn't really be controversial, because their audience is very, very broad. It's across the mainstream spectrum, those shows, so instead what they would do was find the kernel of each situation that was about, I think the categories were fat, drugs, including liquor, stupidity and incompetence, and there's another in there, and that was about it, it wasn't about politics. Oh sex!

PK: Okay, okay, but generally, I'm thinking of Fox News reports, they keep going on about the liberal media bias. Is that really something? I mean a lot of the commentary on the colour-coded thing does come from the Left. Is that a kind of pattern that you recognised?

DL: Oh yeah, well what they mean by that is, from their point of view it's true, because everything is more liberal than them.

PK: Yes, sure.

DL: So liberalism was a dirty word starting with Bush Senior I think, a no word. And it was important not to say you were a liberal. A liberal tradition was a bad thing, because the whole country veered to the Right with Reagan and never recovered. But Fox News is, they get their comeuppance, Colbert's entire show is predicated on being a send-up of Bill O'Reilly on Fox.

PK: Right, yes.

DL: People don't always remember that, but that's the character he's doing.

PK: Yes, there's a terrific interview somewhere I've seen between Colbert, in character and O'Reilly himself.

DL: And Stewart was actually on the O'Reilly show the other day. And then what they actually used was edited, and Stewart went on his show and said you should really go on the web and watch the whole thing unedited, because it comes out quite differently. From their point of view, the whole world, media is against them. Stewart was on about this just the other night. The liberals control the Girl Scouts, and obviously Hollywood, and he went on and on, and obviously the list. From Fox News, the liberals are totally in charge, whereas liberalism has died in this country, it has no power. And the President, who is supposedly liberal, it's very hard to tell, because of the people he surrounds himself with. And because of the kinds of actions he takes. Now, I like to say that if you could make a list of ten things that were important in society that were policy issues, he's probably only doing better than the Republicans on three of them, and the same on the other seven.

#### *9.4.10 Dan Piraro*

Philip Kirby: So maybe a little profile about yourself; if that's okay?

Dan Piraro: Oh okay, about what I do and who I am, and that sort of thing?

PK: Yes, have a talk about yourself!

DP: Yes. So I have a syndicated newspaper cartoon called Bizarro, which has been published in the United States since 1986. And it's currently in around 300 papers around the world, most of which is North America, but I also have, I've actually published on six out of seven continents, so that's pretty, although I probably have three papers in Asia and one paper in South Africa or something, but still, I still manage to grab six out of seven continents.

PK: So you're trying to break the Antarctic market at the moment?

DP: Yes. As soon as they open up a regular newspaper down there with a funny page I'll see what I can do. Anyway I've published fourteen, I think fourteen books of comics, three books of prose, and I've won most of the major comic awards.

PK: And what is it you try, obviously I've seen a few of them online and in various places, but what is it that you try and do with your cartoons? Are they always politically motivated? What kinds of things do you try and do?

DP: Not, not really. I tend to; for the most part I'm just trying to be funny. I'm only trying to create something that is humorous and that's my main goal. I tend, I definitely tend toward surreal types of humour in the tradition of Gahan Wilson, Glen Baxter, that sort of thing. And I just do single panel cartoons, I typically don't do long strips of any sort. But yes I do occasionally, occasionally I will comment, but only because I'm a human being living on planet Earth. And I see things that either annoy me or depress me or perplex me,

so I often do social commentary, so that is not, I've actually kind of become known for a certain amount of social commentary. But that's not really what Bizarro as a cartoon strip is sold for, they don't sell it as, they sell it as a strip that, a feature with a point of view, but not really a commentary in the way that they would sell Doonesbury. I guess you're familiar with Doonesbury, aren't you?

PK: Yes.

DP: I figured that being American politics it might not have a lot of play over there, but you've probably heard of it. So yeah, it's not by any means as political as Doonesbury, but I do occasionally get involved in social commentary regarding anything from religion to politics in a non-specific way. I would never do a caricature of a specific politician, but I would maybe do. I would maybe have cavemen making a speech that would definitely remind you of any number of politicians that you've known throughout your life.

PK: So where did the idea then, more specifically for what I'm interested in, for the Japanese Homeland Security Advisory System? Where did that come from? Was it primarily a humorous piece rather than a satirical, political piece?

DP: Well, this is a perfect example of the kind of commentary I do. The homeland security code, what are we calling it? The code? What are we calling it?

PK: I think the official definition is the Homeland Security Advisory System.

DP: Advisory System, thank you. The Advisory System is not, I guess they're not using it so much anymore, and it really wasn't a faction of one party or another, this was really just like the "theatre of safety", here in the United States after 9/11. And it's so ludicrous, and so utterly useless, that you simply can't not comment on it; it's just such an easy target. And on top of which there are so many Americans who really kind of live and die by this kind of fear, that's Fox News, and when I say that I have quotation marks around the word "news", the Fox News network. That's why they're so successful, is because they tap into that kind of primal fear that a certain number of people all over the world live their lives by, instead of rational, logic, history, knowledge, facts, and the other things that are at their disposal. They live; they make all their decisions based on primal fears. And that's clearly who this Advisory System is talking to. And so I thought yes, definitely, let's do a Godzilla; it just seemed like a funny way to parody that entire system. It was really no more thought into it than that at the time.

PK: Yes, I think the Fox News thing is very accurate on your behalf, because I think they were one of the last news stations to keep having it on their ticker.

DP: Well, yes. The first and most obviously stupid thing about it is that it's always high!

PK: Right.

DP: So at what point does anybody, we're just supposed to remain for ten years now, 365 days a year; we're all supposed to be on high alert. Clearly a warning, if there was an air raid siren that was running non-stop for ten years, people would stop climbing under their desks, it just gets old. And that's clearly what the Advisory System has done. But Fox News continues to beat all those dead, scary horses for as long as they can get away with it.

PK: Yes. And you mentioned 9/11 there. Over in Britain, in the weeks immediately after that, there was definitely a lull, certainly from the usual comedians. It wasn't the mood to be funny in. Was poking fun at this advisory system, was that one of the first ways that people were coming to terms with homeland security and starting to make fun again, because it was a very early-on device?

DP: I think it was. Comedians are always in a hurry to poke fun at any news event, be it tragic or not, but of course we have to wait, as they, as we commonly say in the humour business, comedy is tragedy plus time. And you have to wait until a certain amount of

time goes by, and everybody knew that, but that was one of the safer elements, because it was, rather than being a part of the tragedy it was a part of the solution, supposed solution. So things like airport security and the Advisory System were, I would guess, were among, to my memory at least, were among the first things to be safe to make fun of.

PK: Yes. And I think that idea of, like you just said, “safer elements”, that’s exactly what I was trying to get at. It was a good, a vehicle to get into these things without having to get into the tragedy of it; you can use this as kind of vehicle. And just lastly, as an artist, I don’t get to speak to artists too much about this system so it’s great to talk to a professional in this field, did the system just become more of an icon than anything else? Obviously, we’ve talked about its limitations as a practical tool, was it just more of an icon in the end, because it’s in *24*, the television series, it’s all, it’s in these kinds of things, was it just a work of art in some ways?

DP: Yes. I would say so. It reminds me a lot, I don’t know. I’ve been to Europe many times but I don’t recall ever having noticed this, but here in the United States we have a thing called, what is it called? It’s an air, what do they call the thing? Anyway, it’s a yellow sign with three black triangles pointing toward the centre and it’s supposed to designate a bomb shelter.

PK: Like a fallout shelter.

DP: A fallout shelter, that’s the word I was looking for! We had these fallout shelter signs, and I’m 53 years old, so I remember these things very well from the 1960s, during the Cold War. So these fallout shelter signs used to be everywhere. And when I was a kid we were taught to take them seriously, we were supposed to know where they were in our neighbourhood in case there was ever a nuclear attack by the Russians, or by the then Soviet Union. But nowadays it’s just an icon, you still see them occasionally around the United States, you see them here and there, but they’re old and rusty. And I used to have a t-shirt with one on it, the exact same kind of thing, it just became outmoded, people stopped noticing them at some point. Although I think that one certainly lasted longer than the Advisory, the exact same kind of thing, yes, it completely just becomes iconic. And I’m guessing there are a lot of people, a lot of young people that are not going to know what the symbol means, but they’ve seen it.

PK: Yes. I guess at least with that one it had, people knew what to do if they saw it, because one of the criticisms of the Advisory System is that people don’t even know, not only is it always at orange, but people don’t even know what that means.

DP: Right. It just means “be afraid, be very afraid.” That’s all it can tell you. It’s a fear level. How afraid should I be today? Orange or red?

#### *9.4.11 Shawn Reese (2011)*

Philip Kirby: So just simply to start, if you could tell me a little bit about your involvement with the HSAS, please?

Shawn Reese: Well, I’m an analyst here at the Congressional Research Service and I did research on the HSAS starting back in the summer of 2003, I believe, when it had just been announced. And no one had worked on it. And you probably have access to that report that I wrote. And since then I have been involved just monitoring, until it got replaced, and I’ve been gone for the last ten months, until it got replaced. And I testified on it, which you’ve probably seen my testimony. And that is about it. Like I said I’m a little rusty on the topic area because I’ve been gone nine, ten, eleven months, and I am no longer covering this issue.

PK: No problem, so if you could just tell me why the report was commissioned in the first place?

SR: The report was strictly done on my initiative. I took a look at the warning system and it seemed to be a little vague, especially for some things that weren’t released to the



public. Because it doesn't have any warnings or guidance to the public, it was strictly meant to be used by the federal government, so that is what spurred the report.

PK: So, it was trying to accomplish then; it was better trying to inform the federal level, or all levels?

SR: It was meant to inform Congress, who has responsibility of oversight for the Department of Homeland Security and specific actions that they take, like the Homeland Security Advisory System.

PK: Okay, so they could better refine it.

SR: Yes.

PK: And how was the report assembled; what was your methodology for putting it together?

SR: Primarily looking at the brief history of how the system was developed. Announcements that came from the department and prior to that it was coming from the Office of Homeland Security, which Secretary Ridge, former DHS Secretary Ridge, led back in 2002, through 2003 when the department was split up, and then briefly looking at other warning systems that were out there used by the Federal government like NOAA and things like that.

PK: Okay, so in terms of, I've seen there are multiple editions of it, so just periodically you'd go back and revise it, as per the differences that had happened in the mean time?

SR: Right.

PK: Okay, so some of those changes might be that there had been more alert levels?

SR: Well, the changes that the report has gone through has primarily been when there has been a raising or lowering of the alert system, when it was still active, or when Congress had made some significant change in legislation, or some department had made some change or announcement. And that report will now no longer be updated since there's no system. The system is no longer active and we have some new hires here at CRS who I believe are going to be looking at the new system, but I seriously doubt that there will be any action on that unless there are some problems with the new system.

PK: I see. I was going to raise the new system as well, because in many ways I thought that the reports you were writing were quite pre-emptive of the things that the NTAS, the new one, is doing. So, for example, in the first edition, I quote, "Congress could consider directing DHS to issue general warnings concerning the threat of terrorist attacks without using the HSAS to notify state and local governments". So there were quite a few precursors in that that have subsequently gone into the Obama one.

SR.: Right, and also I testified before the task force at DHS that came up with the recommendation for the new system, about two or three years ago. I'm one of the supposed subject matter experts listed in that and basically it seems that the new system, again very limited knowledge on the new system, but it does seem like the new system does take into effect some of the options I had provided in my original report.

PK: Yes, certainly, obviously the taking away of the colours and being a bit more specific about, what we were saying earlier, about what actions should be taken. Just generally, on the methodology, there were a lot of newspapers referenced in the notes. Were they a good source on it? The media take?

SR: At the time it was the only source. That and official, anything that the government had put out, because no one had written on this topic, no one had researched it.

PK: No, it's definitely one of the first I can find, any kind of sustained analysis.

SR: My report was the very first.

PK: Yes, a little about what I've been reading recently, about the politicising of the system. So there were some allegations that it was raised, for example, just before major elections or things like this. And there's a quote, again, from the 2005 edition of your report, which is: "the public may begin to question the authenticity of the threat level", if it's continually raised and then lowered. Is that something you tried to tackle in your report?

SR: No, I avoided that just because what limited evidence I could find could not substantiate those types of claims. Yes, there were alert levels raised when things were going on in the political sphere here in America, but the political sphere is always active here in America. So I couldn't find anything and that comment is not in reference to that. That comment is actually the idea of complacency.

PK: "The boy who cried wolf".

SR: Yes, exactly. That's what that is referencing, it's not referencing politics. It's referencing the fact that not just Americans, but people in general, have a tendency to start ignoring things if you constantly warn them that the sky is falling, and the sky never falls.

PK: Yes, Chicken Little.

SR: Yes, Chicken Little. The sky is falling.

PK: Yes, I keep coming across that in the media reports of it.

SR: Right.

PK: On the media reports, what do you think of the humorous takes that were made on it? Because there is a lot of official literature and then the other major set of literatures on this system are the Jon Stewart, *Saturday Night Live* kind of things.

SR: Right, well I have an original copy by the artist who did a political cartoon on it when my report came out. Yeah, I wrote the guy and said I'm the guy that wrote that report; can I have a copy of that cartoon? And he sent me an original copy and signed it which I thought was pretty awesome. I'm entertained by it, but that's just because I have a good sense of humour on it. But again, it's this idea of how do you want the public. Now there is a whole bunch of academic and it goes back for years, into civil defense back in the '40s and '50s. This whole idea of how you keep the public aware of dangers. How do you provide that kind of information to them? I did not go into that per se, just because the type of work we do here for Congress wasn't meant to be a historical, in-depth discussion of warning systems, but I know a lot of organisations have done that work. And I think that humour side, it's how, especially us in Europe and the United States, it's how we deal with things.

PK: Yes, in some ways the humorous takes on this are some of the first instances in the war on terror that humour has really been used about this. Because certainly over here, in the year or two after 9/11, there was very little humour or anything about the war on terror. It was very reserved. And this was in many ways, mocking this was one of the first instances of the satire of the war on terror more generally.

SR: Well, it's very typically American to be all puritan and conservative about something and then have this other side of the coin where we're mocking and being sarcastic. The duality of American life.

PK: Yes, I think that's probably reflected in Britain as well. Generally, in a personal capacity, what do you think of the system? Good idea, bad idea?

SR: I think my report reflects my view on it. Because I'm sitting right now in an official capacity talking to you I am restricted from giving my opinion, but I think the report probably gives you a good idea. If you look at my testimony, if you look at the things that the task force recommended, you can understand that obviously there were some things that the system was not doing well and it attempted to fix that, so I think that is a reflection of my view on the warning system.

PK: Okay, I won't press you on that one then.

SR: Alright.

PK: Generally, these alert systems are more things that you get in the States, than we get over here. For example, you have the hurricane alert systems, which obviously aren't so applicable over here. Is there a culture of alert systems in the States that this feeds into?

SR: I think there's a culture of security that is different, especially between Britain and the United States. You guys are more comfortable with the security cameras everywhere, whereas America, look at the fits we're going through with the security checks at airports here in the United States. And I think it's also the fact that Europe, especially Britain, and the issue with Ireland, and Germany and Europe dealing from the 1970s onward with political and ideological terrorism. I think you took the terrorism, security thing a lot more seriously a lot quicker, and the United States kind of came into this game late. We were very secluded. We were protected by two oceans I think is the historical term.

PK: Well 9/11 is a huge marker in that respect, because it's the first mainland attack.

SR: Exactly.

PK: Whereas Britain with the Blitz and things like this, we're slightly more used to it.

SR: The bombing, the troubles in Northern Ireland, it's just that there's definitely a different culture and aspect to this. And as I'm sitting here talking to you, CNN is running this constant story about Osama bin Laden's cell-phone secrets.

PK: Yes, that was huge news over here, obviously. In terms of the CNN take on it, in its early days, there was a lot on the tickers, on various news stations and things like that, but did that fade out after a while?

SR: It did. When the system first came out it was big news. When there were any changes initially, it was big news. Then my report came out, and that became big news. I was on vacation, and *The New York Times on Sunday* ran a large article on it, happened while I was gone. I think that was August 2003, or September 2003, I don't remember precisely. And it was big news. And then as we got used to these warning changes happening, everybody got kind of complacent, exactly as was predicted.

PK: Yes, just looking at the timeline of it, I think the last time it was raised, certainly on a national level, was in 2005 or something like that.

SR: Yes, something like that. And I'm not even sure that now that the System is no longer in use. I do know that the airports since 9/11 have never gone below orange.

PK: Yes, so you get the specific geographical warnings, don't you?

SR: Sector specific, yes.

PK: Because that was a criticism of it as well, that if you raise the whole, the population of America is 250 million or whatever, and everyone goes to orange yet the threat might only be to New York, or even to a specific area of New York.

SR: Right. And then the fact that the system was not made to inform the public. Nor was it made to inform local governments. The original system was specifically for the federal government. It was a very odd way to do it.

PK: And it sounds like a negative word, but in a way it was a propaganda tool. Do you think in some ways it was aimed at the public more than it was aimed at anyone else?

SR: I believe that the system was part of the maturation process of American society in the war on terrorism.

PK: Exactly. I think you summed that up very well there. I think it plays a lot into the culture surrounding it.

SR: Right.

PK: As much as it is a warning in itself. You referenced civil defense there as well; do you know of any systems that this was playing off? We have a system over here in Britain called the BIKINI system, bizarrely, which is also colour-coded for terrorism. Do you know of any linkages like that?

SR: I am unaware. Now linkages, I know the DHS and the US government looked at Israel. I know that Britain's systems were looked at. But as far as anything going back to US historical warning systems, I believe they were not used.

PK: So it's original in that regard.

SR: Yes.

PK: Interestingly, I noticed the other day that Russia are introducing a colour-coded one, just as this one was being phased out in January, the Russians announced that they were going to implement their own one, which was also going to be colour-coded.

SR: And they're going through their own cultural change toward terrorism themselves.

PK: Yes, again it seems to be linked up to this shift, doesn't it?

SR: Yes.

#### *9.4.12 Shawn Reese (2012)*

Philip Kirby: So you mentioned very briefly before, Shawn, which was the process behind writing the report, but could you give me a little more detail on that? So is it purely, the reports you wrote were off your own bat so to speak?

Shawn Reese: Well, when I got here we didn't have anybody here really. I was hired to do emergency preparedness stuff and I came in October, 2002, prior to that I had worked for a government agency that was being transferred to DHS.

PK: What was that agency? Because they just amalgamated a whole load of stuff, right.

SR: Yes. It has to do with secure telecommunications and national communication systems and so I knew that I didn't want to go to DHS and I was looking to do something else, because I was the lone guy doing national security policy stuff, among a bunch of geeks who did telecommunications issues. They were all technology driven, and that isn't what I was working on. So I was hired here to work on emergency preparedness issues, and I started out talking about how the federal government communicates in an emergency based on my knowledge working with NCS. And then, about that time, the Homeland Security Advisory System was announced and people were wondering what it was about and we were getting questions and I was answering those and finally, I said, "you know, I should write a report that talks about what it is, some issues associated with it, are there things that are happening?" And that was where the whole complacency, if

you scream the sky is falling enough, people stop listening. So, I did some research and I wrote that report based on the idea that I knew people were going to have questions about it, and I'd gotten a few, but not a lot, and so I did the research, I found out how it was developed, I looked at the announcements that the DHS and the Office of Homeland Security and the Attorney General and everyone had been making about them. And then figured out that we'd heard chatter about this or that, and was it affecting a specific sector within the government or within private industry and that was the beginning of the report.

PK: So, if you work for the CRS, are you given, kind of, a certain amount of freelance ability? That you can go off and write the report you want?

SR: We are expected to understand the needs of Congress, do our daily activity of interacting with them, past experiences with other things you've worked on, and as long as its within your jurisdiction of issues you cover and you're not being bombarded with the daily requests of Congressional offices or committees, yes, we're pretty much allowed to determine what we want to write on; as long as it falls within that purview of responsibility.

PK: And, the report itself, I've done pretty much the whole timeline now, and the major publications on it, and it was the first sustained criticism, certainly the first criticism with any kind of intellectual merit!

SR: Yes.

PK: And I think we see that, because your report comes out, and, like we've talked about briefly before, that's when a lot of these cartoons get published.

SR: That one up there.

PK: Right this one, yes, I managed to track down the one you mean. That's by Stayskal?

SR: And he signed it for me.

PK: Nice. So it was kind of casually being criticized and then your report solidified that and allowed people to rally around it a bit. Would you agree with that? That was the first kind of sustained criticism.

SR: Yes. Yes.

PK: Yes, and in that way it gave people a kind of impetus to criticize it.

SR: Right.

PK: You mentioned briefly when we had coffee that there was a precursor to the System, which I've read in a couple of reports, but not many, in Hawaii.

SR: Right.

PK: I wonder if you could give me any more information on that.

SR: You know I've looked for it, and I've not found anything other than some links to the Hawaiian National Guard and that's where I would look. I would start with the Hawaiian National Guard or talk to the Hawaiian Office of Homeland Security or Emergency Management, or whatever it's called. My understanding was they were the one's who had a colour-coded system that was looked at and used as an example for the HSAS.

PK: Okay.

SR: They don't release it to the public, they don't use it to advise the public and the HSAS when it first came out, even though it was advised to the public, as I pointed out, and

everyone has since pointed out, is that it wasn't meant for the public. But my understanding is that Hawaii may still be using some form of this, I'm not sure, or they may have gone to the new terrorism alert system and they had never released it to the public.

PK: Yes, so if you're looking back at the lineage of this, originally it was only designed for the federal level. Why did it, do you think, get broadcast to the public in that way. There was a demand from the public, or people just thought this was a good system?

SR: I think there was a desire by the administration and initially the Office of Homeland Security and later DHS to show that they were doing something and they wanted to give people an idea that. Now we're getting into the whole conversation about emergency communications and why we talk to the public; what obligation does the federal government, or the state and local, whatever, government, those in authority, what obligation do they have to inform the public of an impending disaster or a terrorist attack, public safety, and so there was a desire to, I believe, I believe there were some statements made by then Director Ridge about the idea that they want to give people the knowledge, but also to calm, and I don't think it calmed anybody. I believe it just caused people to speculate and worry. But that was the desire, I believe, to show that they were doing something.

PK: Yes, because when, there's that CIA memo that's something like "Bin Laden determined to strike in the US", and I'm trying to think when that, and Bush saw that the month before, and I'm trying to think when that got released to the public. And whether this was some kind of way to say, "Look, everything we know we're going to give out, so that you can't ever say we had information that we didn't share."

SR: Well, now you're talking about CYA, where they attempt to cover their asses. That is a factor that goes in to communication by the federal government, or state and local government, is that desire to show people, "hey, if something happens, we made the effort to inform you." Unfortunately, if you look at my report and you look at all the warnings that came out when the HSAS was used, they were never specific. Toward the end they got very specific about the sector, primarily aviation, and they got specific in the sector, but they never provided much detail.

PK: Yes, which is strange because the Homeland Security Presidential Directive Three, which Bush signs and creates the System in the first place talks about the geographical specificity of the System and the fact that this is going to be used for certain locations, certain sectors of the economy. But that didn't come for ages, even though it was there at the beginning.

SR: Right. But they were learning. I guess on one level you could say that they were learning and refining it as they went. Another way to look at it is that the HSAS was never really used by the Federal government to communicate with one another. Agencies you would hope, you would think, were informing each other of these issues and this was basically used as a tool to communicate with the media and the public that this information. That the Federal government had this information, that these things were happening and they wanted to give people an idea that this stuff was happening and also show that they were making an effort.

PK: Right. And the beauty of the fact that it's giving out information, but not at the same time, is that later, and I know you have your official hat on so I won't go for the political dimension too much, but when there were these accusations that it was being used for...

SR: Political use.

PK: Political use and reasons, that's when they go, "oh, we can't tell you exactly why we've changed it, because it's all top secret information."

SR: Right.

PK: It's all classified information, so you'll just have to trust us. Yeah, right, and later it turned out that one of the reasons it changed was a bin Laden video that was three years old or something.

SR: One of the things I have never done is take a look at the dates of the changes, the warnings, then see what was happening politically. Either here on the Hill, I have never done that.

PK: That has been done, though. There was a chap at Cornell, I forget his name, who got polling data and major events and when it was changed and he knows a lot more about statistics than I do and he calibrated it, correlated it and whatever the statistics is.

SR: And do you know what he showed?

PK: Yes, he found that a raise in the alert caused a bump in the polls for Bush. And they happen at, one of them is the Democratic National Convention, where it's raised straight afterwards. But something damaging would come out about Bush or the Bush administration and then suddenly the next week the alert was raised. These kinds of things.

[...]

PK: And I think he was suggesting, and again you'll know more about this than I, the Republicans are the party of national security, so if people think that there's a threat then they automatically go for Bush, or Bush is the 'war on terror' president, or he would have been stronger on that than Kerry would have been, or whoever he was up against.

SR: Right.

PK: So yes, I guess the 'why', is the question that hasn't been answered yet. But looking at the statistics from a layman's point of view, and this guy's at Cornell so I assume he knows what he's doing, he found this correlation.

SR: Right. You know this cause and effect idea, you have to wonder whether it was purposefully done and. I don't know. I would have to look at the statistics, I would have to see the polling data, you would also have to look and see what else was happening at that time. Just because that stuff was going on and then the alert got raised is not necessarily indicative of it being used politically. But it may have been. But I think there would have to be some other data looked at.

PK: And it's strange that because, as we've talking about, there was so much criticism of the System, both in the popular media and more official dimensions, it's a wonder that it would have any effect on people, that people would've.

SR: I don't know, people still are affected, as much as people may say, "oh, the government this, or the government that", people still do listen when the government says stuff.

PK: Yes, I think it's easy to be critical from a distance, and certainly from Britain! But if I'd been sat in an American airport and it had suddenly gone up to orange, I'm sure I'd have had a different reaction to it than reading about it in the past tense from Britain. So there's that kind of immediacy to it, as well. Right, I wondered if we could talk a little bit about, so I've talked to the principal architect of the System and he is a former Army officer and, as you might imagine, he says that the DEFCON system had an influence on him. As well, he was going around various states looking at their systems, and I assume that that's when Hawaii was brought in, or the Smokey Bear system, or whatever else he was looking at, but I wondered if you could explain a little more, because of your history in the army, about the DEFCON system and what that does, and its differences.

SR: When I was in I never dealt with the DEFCON system. My understanding is the DEFCON system, and the idea that you go to all these different levels and it was designed

for, actually, full-scale war with the Soviet Union, and the idea of the nuclear exchange and preparing and alerting different levels of conventional forces, whether its ground forces air forces, and then the nuke systems. And, the only correlation I can see between the HSAS and the DEFCON system is the DEFCON system said if you're at DEFCON Three, you're going to, the US military is going to do the following things, and lays it out in a list fashion. HSAS, same thing: if you're at yellow, orange, red, Federal government is going to do the following things. That is the only correlation I could see.

PK: Yes and the DEFCON system works a lot better in that regard, because it's a disciplined group of people and there are certain measures that they take.

SR: And that's how they operate, they do everything by check lists. I mean, submariners, in the Navy, do everything by check list. Pilots do everything by check list. Our nuke forces, everything by check list. And you train those check lists and you understand, if 'y' happens you do 'x'.

PK: Yes, which is I guess why the DEFCON system is still around and the HSAS is in the dustbin now. Just a couple of things, which I've been thinking about, the illogicality of the System in some ways, which is that, as a terrorist, thinking as a terrorist! The best time to strike is going to be when the alert, because the alert levels, like the DEFCON system too, are linked to protective measures. So yellow you stop one in two cars, for example, and orange you stop every car, say, the best time to strike is surely going to be as soon as the level has been lowered. And you get these very strange press statements, by, I think it was Chertoff, so after Ridge had gone, who says, "Well, the difference between yellow and orange is the protective measures; as we go up, more protective measures are enforced." And he's talking about it being lowered and he says, "But of course, we've gone down to yellow, but we're still as protected." Because he can't say, "We're much less protected now." Because that's an invitation, so I just wondered what you thought about that. I mean, can these kinds of things even work at all?

SR: Well, that's the question. You're question is assuming that the HSAS alert level actually affected government security measures.

PK: Which is a big assumption?

SR: A big assumption. But say that it's nothing more than a tool used to advise people and maybe there were some changes in security levels based on the alert level, but overall, the Federal government is going to be doing what it always does to protect itself. So, what the alert level is may not have any factor, right. And then you also have to assume terrorists pay attention to that kind of stuff: maybe they do; maybe they don't. I mean, I haven't seen anything that said that terrorists planned more attacks, or thought of more things when the military or the security forces are on higher alert, or lower alert. I mean obviously they look for weaknesses and attempt to do things. That's also an assumption, and maybe that's a nation state on nation state, when you go with non-nation state actors like terrorists and you look at the goals behind terrorism. To me, it scored bigger political and mental attack if you let the alert system go up and then you attack. And show the alert system or the measures that are being done by the government don't matter.

PK: Right, so that would undermine the government as well as just the alert system.

SR: So you have two assumptions, you have one assumption that the alert levels actually affected government operations. And I'm not sure it does, or did. And two, you're making an assumption that terrorists pay attention to that kind of stuff. And I guess on some level they may, but I don't know how much that factors in to terrorist attack. Not sure.

PK: Right, and so ultimately it goes out of fashion. And do you think that was because. So two things are happening at once: there's a lot more criticism and it's being slowly retired and Chertoff doesn't use it so much and it's been ridiculed and these kinds of things, but at the same time Bush, the whole rhetoric of the war on terror is changing. In the sense that, I mean, I don't know, is the term the war on terror still used?



SR: The global war on terrorism? You know, you don't hear a whole lot of it. It's still being used. But we're also talking about, you know it's a decade later and the public has gotten used to seeing these kinds of things. The Federal government has evolved doing different things, and the need for this type of warning system. I don't know if it's necessarily, if it was phased out because it was ridiculed as much as it was phased out as it may not have been needed. It wasn't serving a purpose the way it had initially served, the public has gotten used to this idea. Not as much as I think some people say get used to increase security at airports, but people still bitch about it. Right, so I think there's an evolution in the public's eye, the media's eye, and the government. I think when you take those three things and they all affect each other, definitely the media affect how the government operates and the media affects how the public perceives things and government takes into account how the public. I mean it's chicken and egg, or it's a never ending loop, but all these factors are there affecting one another, and how they interact with one another. So, I don't know, I think maybe it was just the eventual evolution of the System. What we used it for and why we used it. I'm not so sure the ridicule got rid of it, as much as it served its purpose and it was time to move on. I mean I think that's as valid an argument as anything else.

PK: And, you mentioned the media there, and when you think of it, when you think of the System, is that the main way you remember seeing it? Announcements on the news...

SR: That was THE number one way the American public was informed. I mean, nobody goes to the DHS website everyday to check out the warning level. What they do is watch Fox or CNN, and the ticker goes across the bottom.

PK: Right, and I guess that just reinforces the point you just said about the power of the media I mean, because even if it's not changing, yellow, the default, even if you just keep broadcasting that that's a certain...

SR: For a while, there was a period there. I want to say it was 2004 or 2005, Fox, all day long, at the bottom would say what the alert level was. And then the airport. You know CNN does that special airport news on the television. They would purposely let you know what it was constantly, and then you would see these signs at the airport. So, yeah there was a period of time where it was constant daily reminder of what it was, where we were at.

PK: Right, so yellow was elevated, so even if you're just saying that, even if you're just saying "it's yellow, it's elevated", that sounds dramatic. That's a thing in itself, even if that's the default level.

SR: But nobody knew what they were supposed to do when it was yellow and elevated, and primarily because there was nothing in the System that said what the public was to do. It was strictly meant to inform Federal agencies on what they were meant to do, but Federal agencies weren't really using that. They already had this kind of stuff. And I think that was one of the number one criticisms; it was one of the number one things that I pointed out, is, if it was meant to inform the government, why are we telling the public? And if we're telling the public, but we're not telling them what they're supposed to do, what's the purpose of it?

#### *9.4.13 Mary Lou Reker*

Philip Kirby: Well if I can start then, it's very interesting to get these oral histories a bit, is when I say, I should have brought a picture of it, when I say the color-coded alert system, what are the first things that you think of, Mary Lou?

Mary Lou Reker: I can see the color green or red, kind of.

PK: I'm getting a green! I'm getting a green color!

MLR: Exactly! I think of *Saturday Night Live*, and that skit that they did.

PK: Yes, so a lot of people, their dominant memory of it is screenic. So it would be on the television screen. Would that be more than the physical, more than a poster or something, it would be seeing it on television? Did you ever see a poster?

MLR: No, I think the first poster I ever saw was in your office. I probably saw posters, but they would tend to annoy me. I mean, I probably saw it on TV somewhere but I don't have any clear recollections of it. And the fact it was so, at so many levels and it totally depended on somebody telling you which level you were at, rather than you perceiving yourself to be at any certain level that it became a disconnect; a total disconnect.

PK: Yes, so where would you even find out about it, just from watching TV, hearing about it on the radio.

MLR: I don't watch television very much. I do have the radio on in the morning and where would I hear about it?

PK: Was it on the radio? It's a very visual thing, but did they announce it ever?

MLR: Yes, they would announce it on the news.

PK: Good morning this is an orange alert day! Or something like that?

MLR: Something like that. But because I watch so little TV, that I don't have much recollection of it.

PK: Yes, so one of the criticisms about it is that, if you're not paying attention to these media then how do you? It's not like a siren or something; I mean if you're not paying attention to it, how can you possibly know what's going on.

MLR: Be aware, yes. I seem to recollect that I would occasionally here an announcement in the Metro that would say, "This is an orange alert".

PK: Yes, and airports were a big place where they would announce it more than showing it on screens. And I've definitely seen some images of the charts on the DC Metro. But again, there's loads of posters up I suppose.

MLR: I don't remember seeing a chart, but I do recollect, at least I think I do, recollect hearing audio announcements, you know, how they occasionally say, "if you see a bag, ask somebody if it's there's."

PK: Yes, and it's very dim in the Metro! So it would make more sense to have...

MLR: Audio. Of course, it's one of those strange things, if someone says it's an orange alert, and you're not quite sure what orange is anyway.

PK: What the difference is between orange and yellow?

MLR: Yes. And it's also kind of, a kind of helpless feeling, because what are you going to do? I mean, are you going to not go to work? Are you going to get out of the Metro? Are you going to just go ahead and be more scared than you were going to work? It's a play-off I think, there's a real trade-off with fear and creating fear in people as they go about what they're doing. Because if you're telling them, they should be more scared than they were yesterday, but there's nothing they can do about it.

PK: Yes, so one of the major criticisms about it is that there were not guidelines. Even if you'd know exactly what to do on a yellow, for example, say orange was don't come into work, at least you would have had your instructions, you would have known what to do.

MLR: Right, don't come in. But what do you do short of that? I mean, avoid the Metro? It's x colour, walk to work. It's y colour, just be afraid but come on.

PK: Okay, so you would be one of those people that didn't change their schedule. If you heard it was orange, you'd do the same things you would any other day.

MLR: I don't know. There were a few times I drove to work because I just said; I don't want to deal with that. I just don't want to deal with it, there's nothing I can do about it, but essentially they're telling me there's danger, so why should I put myself in danger?

PK: Yes, I mean, I could certainly imagine, even though we can be critical of these things, that if I'd been in an airport and they'd suddenly raised it, "hmm".

MLR: Maybe I'll fly tomorrow.

PK: Yes, maybe I'll fly tomorrow or something like that. But that's kind of an interesting thing, that in the cold light of day, or retrospectively, you can look back on it and say this was propagating fear, it was doing this, this, this, but at the time...

MLR: You see there's nothing you can do. I mean you can know it's green, orange, yellow, purple, whatever, but there's, what can you do? I mean, you can start to suspect everyone you see. Actually, at one point I wrote a poem about this, because there was an instruction that you would hear on the Metro, "If you see anything suspicious", "anything unusual" was how it was phrased, "If you see anything unusual, please report it." And as I heard about this I looked up and saw a woman, half of whose head was dyed red. And the other half green! And I thought; now that's unusual. And then I started to look around that car and I could spot five truly unusual things, a guy in a Santa Claus suit...

PK: In the middle of summer!

MLR: Yes, exactly! And a little kid, three little kids, going to some kind of party. So how do you define unusual? And report it? I mean, the guy's wearing a baggy coat, a really baggy coat. Well, that's unusual.

PK: Yes, and what's unusual for one person, isn't unusual for another person.

MLR: Exactly.

PK: But yes, that example is a good one, because I've heard the same criticism about the color-coded system, people didn't know what to do, there were no instructions. And if you see something, say something, we have them in London as well, the problem is what are you meant to be looking for? An unattended bag that's smoking or something, you think, alright, I better report this! But what about someone wearing a baggy coat, you can't start calling 911 for all these things...

MLR: Or a hoodie, we've all seen what's happened when someone's wearing a hoodie and someone thinks that's suspicious, I mean we've got a murder trial going on right now about that, or about to, and the baggy coat in England a few years back.

[...]

PK: Can I ask you, Mary Lou, again more specifically on the alert system. So there was, what a lot of companies or organizations did, was because there were no guidelines for what to do, they developed their own ones. So, if it was an orange alert day, whatever, you'd have to expect your car to get searched or something like that. Or there'd be twice as many security patrols or there'd be people on overtime, but you weren't aware of anything the Library did that was different?

MLR: Oh yes, I was constantly aware of increased security measures.

PK: When it went up?

MLR: I didn't know I would see the reaction and then think, "Oh, there must be a high security alert".

PK: Okay, so it worked that way for you?

MLR: For me, it worked the inverse of...

PK: And what would that be, more security, longer queues?

MLR: Well, I'd see, right, right.

PK: Those kinds of things. A lot of people when they talk about the System, say that it reminds them of this, and reminds them of that, and the whole kind of warning system culture I don't really know that much about, but I know that, it's much bigger than in Britain, so you have hurricane warning systems, or forest fire warning systems, did it remind you of anything like that? So a lot of people, for example, will say it reminds them of the fallout shelter sign, or Smoky Bear. Do you know the Smoky Bear system, which has the same colors in the same order!

[...]

MLR: I knew the Smokey Bear campaign, but because I lived in the city, where it didn't apply so much because it was about forest fires, I wasn't aware that there was color-coding... See, Smokey was around when I was a kid, so I would say ads on TV, but the television ads, I don't recall them emphasizing the color-code, I would think that people living in forested areas would have been more aware of the color-code, you know, so I just remember, the kind of things I remember from those ad campaigns was like, "my father should not throw a cigar out the window", when he was driving, in case we were out in the forest.

PK: Yes, I just think that that's a difference between Britain and America, that there is this more, one of the reasons that I think they set it up as it was, because it had slightly more resonance in America where they had these other warning systems and things.

[...]

PK: So, to round up, on a personal level, are you pleased it's gone? Do you care? Do you have any interest at all?

MLR: I didn't even know it was gone!

PK: So was it something that was kind of picked up and it was there in people's consciousness for a bit, and then just kind of receded.

MLR: I would say, for me, it was that.

PK: So when, 2002 it was introduced, and I guess these things get a lot of fanfare to start with, don't they, and then just kind of tails off.

MLR: Yes, I'm saying to you I wasn't even aware that it was gone, but I remember when you and I, when you first came, and we talked about it briefly, that I thought it was on its way out, so I hadn't even realized that it had been concluded. So I'd heard enough talk about it to know something was going on, but I gather it's been replaced by something else, but I couldn't even explain to you what that is.

PK: Yes, it has been replaced. Well the new system, it's never been used, that's the first thing to note, it's much modest, it has no colors, so it's kind of boring.

MLR: It's a shame!

PK: Only two levels, like high and not so high.

MLR: Is there any non-existent, where we can feel confident?

PK: Yes, at the moment it's non-existent. It's either kind of on, very on, or off. And at the moment it's off. But again, there are always various terrorist attack alerts, but they don't use it this time. I guess it kind of lost credibility. My last point would be, there's this whole political dimension of it, there are people that say it was raised to try and invoke fear, to try and rally support for Bush, and there's a gentleman at Cornell, a PhD student, formerly a PhD student, who did a whole load of statistics, who correlated changes in the alert level with Bush's, former President Bush's approval rating, and found that as it goes up he gets boosted in the polls. Was that something that you knew anything about? Or that really registered?

MLR: I would say that's true.

PK: You would say that's true.

MLR: Yes.

PK: And was it, were those, were they well reported those kinds of political, potential political manipulations of it.

MLR: Now, I wasn't looking for reports on that, so I don't know what was the extent to which it was covered, say, by in-depth reporting or by scholarly articles, but I certainly took a lot of the comedy around it, to relate to a critique of it that had some underlying sense that this was being used for a political purpose, as well as any protective purpose it served.

PK: Yes, and one of the other things I'm trying to get my head around, is, so there's this gentleman at Cornell and he publishes his paper in 2004, which says that there's this correlation, and it absolutely takes off, and it's in loads of newspaper articles and like you say, the chat shows are talking about it, and etc. etc. It's on television. And what I'm trying to get my head round, I wondered why, because prior to that there had been no publications saying anything, either academic or newspapers or anything, I wonder why that took off in such a big way, so when this gentleman says, I think it may have been used for political manipulation, suddenly everyone seems to agree with that, that seemed to fit what they were thinking. Why would that be? Was there kind of a, that the Bush administration were using a politics of fear, was that why it kind of settled very nicely into that. Mary Lou is nodding at this point! So it kind of settled into those general thoughts about...

MLR: I think for certainly much of the population that that would have been true. Now, you could probably. I'd love for you to see a cartoon that was in the back of *The New Yorker*, and I'm guessing it was somewhere around 6 months after 9/11 and it essentially showed, as I recall it, 6 frames of local, each representing a local method of taking care of security, and the one I remember is the senior citizen's golf carts being inspected in some retirement community in some small town in some small state in the United States and children being inspected as they walked into the local Mom and Pop candy store, you know, I mean I think a lot of people felt there was this certain level of nonsense that was going on with that.

[...]

MLR: So I do think that there was a tremendous need on the part of many people to feel they were doing something after 9/11, there was such a feeling of helplessness, you know, so people rushed to do anything they could, whether it was give blood, or watch television, or create a system that would prevent this, or install wheelchairs in the stairwells of the Library of Congress so that somebody could be wheeled out in case of emergency. There's all kinds of signs around this building of things that came in after 9/11, they include meetings that never happened before, that happen on a monthly basis, like, for example, I'm the rep to the emergency management meetings that take place monthly from the Kluge Center. None of those meetings even existed before that, and we're constantly being told of improvements and security, and changes in security and the installation of things

like the wheelchairs and classes are being given as to how help people out in an emergency, what to do if there is any emergency, how to restock the emergency ration bins that we have. Every one of us has a bag that we... Every staff member has one of these that came to us about a year after 9/11.

[...]

MLR: It was unbelievable the reaction to this [9/11], this need to, this incredible need to have, to do something throughout the country; just a deep need to do something.

PK: Yes and a lot of people have said this alert system is a just a mood, just saying look, “we’re on it, we’re on it”, we can calibrate.

MLR: Yes, we have control; we have control, because the feeling was of no control.

#### *9.4.14 Linden Tibbets*

Philip Kirby: On the “red, orange, yellow, blue and green” website, so what was the rationale behind that, why did you create that?

Linden Tibbets: I was doing a lot of thinking about the States in general and I guess kind of how, I wouldn’t say that the government was controlling culture or, it was just how culture seemed to be the consensus that we had, individuals didn’t feel empowered as they used to. Or at least, I’ve only been around 30 odd years, so I’m not sure what it was like back in the ‘60s and ‘70s and even before then, but I guess I felt a sense of yearning for how things were; the strength of the individual, the belief in oneself, entrepreneurship, wild ideas and that kind of thing. And I was looking for different things that weren’t necessarily to blame, but the canaries in the mine shaft, or the chicken and the egg, you know where, is this a product of our culture? Or is this one of the driving influences that creates our culture, where we are now. And the threat level thing had been around for a while, and I figured, it feel out of the public’s consciousness. To me, it was always there, it was always really interesting because especially for someone really interested in design, always looking to simplify things down, to the least common denominator, the smallest individual bite-size chunk. And this was a really good example of that, in that it was really big and powerful and they took this kind of broad uneasy feeling, there are these things that are going on that we should be worried about, or there’s information, we need to band together and defend, or protect and look out for. But it kind of condensed those into this very direct, straightforward colour level. And they’re saying, it’s pretty easy, “this is how you should be.” One of these five things, there was no realm for open discussion. “We’re at this level now, period.” It’s that simple. And it’s one of the tools, one of the many tools that any government, or leader, or controlling body uses to limit the available theme of the discussion; by straining it really small, and in this case, incredibly small, with these five colours. It kind of, you know, people weren’t able to think outside of the box, or felt that it restricted people subconsciously to think of something else. And those are a lot of things that drove my initial interest, my initial interest in that colour-coded level, and then I began to feel out, and look at some of the data, that people were writing about it and thinking about it. It felt to me that I wanted to do something that was less a stand against it and much more of a neutral; “okay, here’s the information”. And then I took it to explore, through the design of that information, to make it easy to read. Was there some way that I could nudge, get my original feelings in there? Without it being really heavy handed. You know, “screw the alert system, this is totally wrong.” I wanted people to get the feeling as well, the subconscious feeling, of what I was trying to say, rather than hitting them over the head with it.

PK: Yes, because that’s one of the most interesting things about it, is, from my reading there’s a lot of, I’m sure you know, Jon Stewart satirical stuff about it. There’s really “anti”. And then there’s quite a lot of “how we can change it and make it better”, that kind of aspect. But the more subtle take that you did with it is working with it, adapting it, and re-presenting it, is very novel.

LT: Yes. I felt like there wasn't a whole lot of stuff left to say for it, or against it, or how to change it. It kind of was what it was. And for us to have a lot of discussion about what we could do better in the future, it's kind of important to also have that take where it's presenting it in a neutral way. Or a way that isn't as heavy, or maybe subtly flavoured with some of the feelings of the time or the things that I was feeling at the time, rather than coming out and taking a stand against it, because it's one kind of thing, one kind of canary in the coal mine that people need to go for and feel like it's just, and to call that one thing out like a symptom of our problems.

PK: And the website is very professional, and it's very artistic. Does that feed into the fact that, as you were kind of saying earlier, the system was more an icon, more an artistic object, than a practical warning system?

LT: I think, yes. From the fact that they were trying to distil it down into something so simple, and the fact that there were colours involved, the second that you have this like colour-coded system, or something that's so heavy with meaning. Red, obviously, "shit's about to go down", green, "go." So, to put it simply, that's the kind of thing that, at a much higher level, a designer engages in. But the general populous also senses that, picks up on that. There's so much more meaning here, that it becomes an icon. It's just five colours, but those five colours have so much meaning, the fact that the colour red and the colour green mean those things that they do, has built up over thousands of years, evolution and our perception of colour. So to try and repackage that, it definitely becomes an icon. And it also becomes a very polarising object, for how people feel about the current government, what are those decisions that are being made. Because it becomes a column or a pillar, it's so simple, it's easy to understand, it doesn't move, it's not about interpretation, at least interpretation as far as what it means, and what people designed it to do. How people actually perceived it is obviously about interpretation, but it became a kind of pillar as far as polarising and eventually I think people really just didn't care, which is kind of interesting too.

PK: Yes, which I mean is represented very graphically in the huge orange at the end...

LT: Yes, yes. I noted in April that they stopped doing the colour-coded thing, I need to go back and update it, cap it off.

PK: Yes. Although, I think the airport sector was always orange, so you can just claim that and it's up to date!

LT: Yes, yes.

PK: So I notice also that the website has won a People's Design Award, what kind of reception did it have? Have you had much feedback on the website?

LT: Yes, there were a few weeks there where we were getting thousands of page-views a day, one of the big posts was a site called "information visualisation", "info viz", I can't remember, but they posted it on, I believe it was the 8<sup>th</sup> or 7<sup>th</sup> year anniversary after 9/11, and so I think that reverberated people and got people talking about it. I don't think it actually won a People's Design Award, but I think it was nominated, or voted on. I don't think it actually won, at least nobody told me!

PK: Yes, well the quality of it was clearly recognised, and I think it's the only dedicated website and it's definitely the most, like I said, professional thing that I think has been done with it, which is why it stands out so much, because in some ways the system is so simple you've made it into a better quality thing than it was originally, if you see what I mean.

LT: Yes, yes.

PK: So what do you think of the system? What do you think personally of the system? Was it a good idea or a bad idea?

LT: I think it's one of those things where it's really easy to call it a bad idea. I think at the time, obviously, people were panicked, they didn't know, they needed some way to convey some kind of information or, at least, especially as I was saying the government must feel, they have a need to assert and reassure people that they have this stuff under control. And it was a very easy way for them to say, "Okay, this is how we feel at the moment", without having to go through a lot of process, and press releases, and confusion, hear-say. Things are either okay, not so okay, very bad, it was a way they thought to be able to convey a simple piece of information very quickly in a time of need. And as it evolved...

PK: So it very much got used as an emotional management?

LT: Yes. And the thing was it wasn't necessarily fooling anybody either. It was, I think people wanted to say, "Oh, it's the government playing with our emotions." But I think there's a broad, whenever there are things like this, broad group of the population that thought it was nonsense.

PK: Yes. I think the satirical criticisms of it are so well developed and so broad, like you say, that it's not like anyone was really going in there with their eyes shut. They knew what was going on.

LT: Yes. And in a sense that's what's actually neat, about how open our press is, and the power that they wield over the government in some areas: the fourth branch.

#### *9.4.15 Janet Weil*

Philip Kirby: So, first of all, it would be great if I could get a synopsis about Code Pink and what it does?

Janet Weil: Sure. Code Pink is a women-led peace organisation based in the United States, working to end the US wars of aggression in Iraq and Afghanistan primarily. Now they're spreading to Pakistan, Yemen, and, of course, Libya. We're working to change foreign policy and budget decisions, federal budget decisions, so that money gets reallocated to needs at home, away from war and militarism. There are dozens of local groups of Code Pink around the United States, there are a few international groups, there was one in London, which unfortunately has withered away, but it was quite active some years ago. Code Pink is a pretty new organisation. It came into being in fall 2002, as a response to the threat of US attack on Iraq, and it was a four month vigil during the late fall and winter 2002, 2003, and so we started not as an organisation per se, but as an independent women's project, and that has grown into a pretty major organisation in terms of the US peace movement. And I would also like to mention that since January 2009, a lot of Code Pink's activities have been around issues of Israel/ Palestine, and working to change US funding and support of the Israeli government and military.

PK: That's a hot topic out in the United States, I think over in Europe criticism of Israeli foreign policy and Israeli domestic policy is quite widespread, but I get the impression that's less so in the States.

JW: Yes. Not only is criticism much more constrained, but the whole frame in which the discussion takes place is much narrower and more difficult. But it's also that APAC, the American-Israeli Political Action Committee is the second-most powerful lobby in the United States. It does wield a tremendous amount of political power in the United States, and particularly over the Congress.

PK: Okay. If I can just then go a little more targeted on my dissertation. Where did the name Code Pink come from?

JW: It's a satire of the colour-coded alert system that was put into place after 9/11. And the women who came up with that name in a discussion. There was a small group of women at a conference around mental issues in the Bay area in the fall of 2002 and they were discussing how to come together and what the group should be called. And a woman who has a radio program on a local station and is a well-known writer and speaker in this



area, [inaudible] Casey, came up with the name Code Hot Pink. At the time we were hearing a lot about Code Orange particularly. And so she came up with the name Code Hot Pink, as a sort of assertion of women and then that got shortened and simplified to Code Pink. Which we then learned, as you may know, is a medical term. Well you've probably heard of Code Blue, which is when someone stops breathing or goes into cardiac arrest, something like that. Code Pink refers to a situation that happens sometimes, a newborn baby is kidnapped from a hospital.

PK: So it kind of works on three levels then, the name. It's got the feminine dimension, it's got this Code Pink baby dimension to it, and also it's a satirical thing.

JW: Right. And the satirical meaning was always the one that was highlighted. But, of course, the use of the colour pink, in whatever context, is a code for women.

PK: Yes, because homeland security especially, I think, as war more generally, has very much been dominated by masculine discourses and masculine agendas so, as well, it's making a point on that.

JW: Right.

PK: So more generally, satire in this kind of dimension, has that a big thing to do with the colour-coded alert system?

JW: Sorry, could you repeat the question, Philip?

PK: So, for example, satire you've used in the name of your organisation to mock the system and has satire been used in other ways to mock the system, has it been a big thing out there, because a lot of the stuff that I've seen has been from Jon Stewart and *Saturday Night Live*, and these kinds of things?

JW: Yes. Satire and humour have been a big part of our presence, of our organisation from the beginning. We've got a lot of satirical street theatre actions. To some extent Code Pink's disruptions of Congressional hearings, which is probably what we're most famous for, that definitely has satirical and mocking qualities. One of the most clever things was in 2007, a transvestite, or rather a transsexual person from Missouri, has put up a big sign that was like a big thought bubble, near Alberto Gonzalez's head. He was hauled into the Senate Judiciary Committee, because Gonzalez, as the Attorney General, was responsible for firing federal judges who did not comply with certain things that the Republican Party wanted them to do, in terms of voter suppression. I mean it was a really serious, a really serious corruption of the US federal judicial system, and Gonzalez, that summer of 2007 was asked to resign, and that went to some of the senate judiciary hearings by the way, too. So that's one example. And I can send you things on our website that are kind of deeply archived now that illustrate some of this. We're doing it all the time, too. Certainly the local groups have participated in many fun and satirical actions over the years. One thing that happened recently was that a local group in Houston, participated in the local art car parade, and they had a funny, a funny and satirical vehicle in that parade.

PK: Yes, because it seems to have been, I don't know about in the States, but after 9/11 initially there was a lull, obviously there wasn't the mood for humour there, and there was a break, but then slowly, slowly it got introduced again, and I just wondered if the mocking of the system, in the way that the Code Pink satire does it, was that one of the first ways in which people were saying "well, we can make fun of homeland security, we can satire it"?

JW: I think there was probably a lot of satirical commentary, in New York City in particular, which of course was the city that was most dramatically hit by 9/11, and then people were also very angry about how the US government did not respond to the situation in New York City. One of the things in New York City, I know, was that people started putting up these signs about Osama bin Forgotten. So anyway, I'm sure that there were a lot of, you know there was a lot of satirical commentary sort of viva voce or under

the radar, almost from the beginning of 2001, but then, as various things developed, in that first term of George Bush, people sort of did find their voices and go into mockery. George Bush, of course, was always mocked, considered a ludicrous figure by people, so there was always that element as well.

PK: So, in terms of the demonstrations and the protests that Code Pink organised, how is pink the colour used in those? Is pink something that everyone has to wear? Is it a uniform? Because I know that on your website, part of the power of some of the protests seems to be just literally the power of the colour pink, it's everywhere and everyone is wearing it, and it's very much associated with your organisation and the anti-war movement, and it's clear what you're getting at.

JW: Yes. Well I can answer the question about how individual women in Code Pink dress.

PK: Yes.

JW: It's sort of evolved, when it first got going back in 2003 there was never a uniform in the sense of all having to wear a pink t-shirt and pink skirt or something like that, but women were really encouraged to dress as fully in pink as possible, to get the message across, and so they did. And our term for that is "pinking up", or to "pink up", and then as the war has dragged on and everything, see I think a lot of people did think that the war in Iraq would be a year at most, or something like that, the so-called operation Desert Storm, though of course then there was all the distinctions with the no-fly zones in Iraq, but the active part of the war then was very brief and a lot of people thought things would be brief like that. But then as things dragged on people started to wear, for example myself, but I'm sure this is true of many people in Code Pink, we wore just regular pants or jeans, but then a Code Pink t-shirt or a pink jacket, that sort of thing, so they weren't in costume, but they would be wearing some pink. And then for participation and for demonstrations and things like this, we tend to be more in costume. And some women really got into that, and there's also a whole sort of group within Code Pink who are talented with fabric and art and they would also start and make incredible huge hats and all these kinds of things. And anyway, getting back to the use of the colour pink, as you may know there's the expression to "pink slip", which means to fire someone from his or her job, so to get a pink slip also means to be fired, so we used for several years enormous banners that were made to look like pink slips. And made out of beautiful fabric and also women would wear pink slips, for example in marches, and that was one of our slogans, was a pink slip, for Bush particularly, but anyone we thought should be fired. So that was another way in which pink was highlighted. So there was the verbal expression, and it's the artefact of these huge pink banners made to look like slips, which of course were very eye-catching and photogenic.

PK: Yes, because from the images that I see on the website, part of the power is, I'm used to looking at men in uniform and those kinds of things, and it completely inverts that kind of logic, if you see what I mean.

JW: That's right.

PK: And I think that gives it, I think it gives it a terrific power. Just finally, if you could just tell me a little bit more about these fire warning systems, because I'm interested in warning systems more generally in the US. So a little bit more about those warning systems, if you would, please.

JW: Sure. And I saw it abbreviated going into Yosemite, it's incredibly beautiful. The fire warning system and sign that I grew up with, and is still often placed at the entrances, like the entrance on a road to either a national forest or a commercial forest is a five, well also it's not shown, usually it has an official list, as the colour-coded alerts are, but it's more like a half circle, like a metre, like metre on an audio recording or something like that.

PK: Okay.

JW: And then there's a needle within that. So, for example, if the needle is all the way over to the right, in the red, that means fire danger is high, very high, and if it's all the way over to the left, on the half circle, in the green, that means fire danger is low, and there's different ways, sometimes there's four, sometimes there's five, sometimes there's extreme, and very high danger, and high danger and then, what's the intermediate one, then it's something like medium or moderate, and then low, but then in the summer, and especially in California where we have, really throughout the US west, we have one hot dry summer, the fire danger for months is usually high or extremely high. But anyway, so sometimes, but sometimes it's more simple. Sometimes it might just be high or low, or something like that. But the signs that I saw going into Yosemite did not have the five steps, I think they're at threes or something like that.

*9.4.16 Robb Willer (first interview)*

Philip Kirby: So, I guess, just to start, I'd be interested in how you, why you thought of writing that paper, how it kind of came about in the first place?

Robb Willer: Sure, okay, so it was spring of 2004, and post-9/11, the Iraq war in full-swing type of environment and the re-election campaign was happening and, during that period of time, had been, for about two and a half years, regular terror alerts, some of which were accompanied by changes in the terror alert system level, the color-coded levels, and many, many of which did not involve changing the level, but were nonetheless very public and high impact. And, a lot of people on the left, not so much in the mass media, but in private conversations, and in online fora, had speculated that this system was being used, to manipulate support for President Bush and his administration.

PK: Yes, like you say, in the media before your paper there was actually very few instances of the media saying this may be used for political purposes, so it's interesting that you're saying it came from more private conversations, and this kind of thing.

RW: That's right. I mean I actually have a pretty good feel for the trajectory of the widely publicized critique of the terror alert system and, my sense is that it didn't really start until summer of 2004, that I noticed. But I'll get to that, and will be happy to talk about that, too. So, in that context, in the spring of 2004, I got interested in testing this idea, and you can't really test the intentions of the White House and the Bush administration in using the terror alert system, but you could test the part where the theory goes that the terror alert system does affect his, support for the president. So, then, what I did was, the research involved two components. One, archival analysis of all of the nationally publicized terror alert announcements that were done by the federal government between 9/11 and some date in 2004 that was specified in the paper, so I had a timeframe. And then once I had done archival analysis, essentially identifying all the cases of these press conferences that were covered by the national media, I then did a series of statistical analyses seeing what was the time-series relationship between announcements of terror threats, their appearance in the media, and then Bush's approval ratings. And, basically I found support for the hypothesis that said terror alerts led to increases in Bush's approval ratings, and it was for a certain window of time after the announcement. And all that could be gleaned pretty easily from the paper.

PK: Yes, so like you say in the paper, it's kind of a temporary phenomenon, and it has this boost in the polls and then it kind of recedes after a while. So I wondered, because of the temporary nature of it, what kinds of uses do you think it was put to? If it's only boosting him in the polls temporarily, what would you think was its efficacy?

RW: So there's two ways to interpret the temporary nature of the effect. One is that the effect actually is temporary. That when there's an announcement like this it affects people's feelings about the president for a couple of weeks, and then it fades off into nothingness. The second interpretation is just one about statistics, which is it's just hard in a time-series analysis to see permanent effect, even if they're there, that as time, from a cause, increase, the number of other causes at play obscure the effect. And so, it's hard to know if there's actually an effect that only lasted two weeks, or if our ability to detect the effect only lasted two weeks. But, let's say it only lasted about two weeks, and I think that

that's probably likely, I think when I did the time-series analysis of Bush's approval, it really kind of suggested the following time-series story of the Bush presidency, which is that Bush gets elected, he gets his honeymoon effect, so there's a boost in his approval, but then, they're starting to get tail-off. He did a few things early on that were not that popular, there was the energy crisis in California in the summer of 2001 I believe, and his approval just wasn't doing great and that also often happens in our current media cycle with presidents after their honeymoon period. Then, 9/11 happened, the biggest one week jump in the history of approval polling for a president happened, and also the highest level of approval happened, and Bush goes up to around 90%. And from there on, the story is basically of declining approval all the way up to the 2004 election, but with plateaus that are created by some positive events for Bush. So, some sort of plateaus that staunched the bleeding of his approval, if that makes sense. So the biggest one would be finding Saddam Hussein in the bunker, that was a significant, not really a boost, it kind of stopped the decline in approval. Also the invasion of Iraq, that was actually a boost about half the magnitude of 9/11, so that was actually like a big, but in general there was this kind of downward trend in approval. It's not that unusual, with regression, regression to the mean, where you're just not going to maintain 90% approval. That doesn't necessarily mean Bush was an ineffective president, it's just the character of the trend. But the, but what I found is that terror alerts served as these kind of plateaus, that sort of stopped the regression of his approval from the 9/11 high, to the mean level that he would end up taking into 2004 election.

PK: Interesting, it's a fascinating area. I mean, we're getting into the realms of speculation a little bit here, but if there were these effects, and we see, and I think you say in your paper, there's a Democratic National Convention and it gets raised then, or, like you say, something bad goes for Bush and so the terror alert changes and it deflects attention. Or temporarily gives him this boost. That kind of suggests that they knew it had this effect, I mean do you think they actually, specifically knew that terror alerts were doing this, or rather it was just part of that, getting on the terror bandwagon, because that is what they were doing? Karl Rove says that that's the kinds of things they were doing. Do you think it was specific knowledge of that, or just a general going for the war on terror?

RW: I mean, I think they're smart, so I think they definitely knew that these announcements would help Bush's approval, but I find it hard to believe they weren't savvy enough to know that. Second, they certainly would have known it after this paper came out! So at the very least they would have known about, because this paper got wide press coverage, it was in two Associated Press articles, which were covered in over a hundred newspapers each, so, you know, there's no way that they missed this research. I mean, it was almost bizarre how much coverage this research got. It was on the Today Show, it was CNN and headline news tickers, people would just talk about it offhand on evening talk shows, comedy shows people would reference it, it was just talked about in this matter of fact way. Like I say, it was in two AP articles, it was in prominent Op-Eds, yes, so it was something I'm sure they knew about, and I know second hand that they knew about it as well, and I'll tell you about that in a second. So I think they definitely knew about this way before the research, so it's a pretty intuitive thing for a political advisor to intuit, but that doesn't mean that they were manipulating the terror alert system, the evidence for that, that would be closer to your department. I can't really do that kind of research, competently. I believe Tom Ridge in his autobiography admitted in his biography that, after saying we never use the terror alert system for political purposes, my sense is he did say he was under some pressure to use it at times.

PK: Yes, that's correct. He talks about this meeting with the Homeland Security Council where they're deciding whether they're going to change it, and I think Rumsfeld and Ashcroft are there, and they're saying, "put it up, put it up", even though he believed, and the DHS believed that the evidence wasn't there to justify it.

RW: Yes, can I tell you a few more things that this has brought up in my mind?

PK: Please do, please do.

RW: So one thing that I wanted to say, is, when I was doing my research, I was actually fortunate in communicating with *The Washington Post*, and an internal document of theirs, that was just a document, where they were keeping track of all the nationally reported terror alerts. Yes, that was very handy, because that would have been very difficult archival research to do from scratch, so I actually based my archival research on largely that document and then I also supplemented it by continuing to follow the alert system after that. And one of the biggest things that everybody forgets is that the terror alert color-coded system created what was, came in later, for the most didn't use it, or the nationally announced terror concerns were, happened before it was even invented. So, this invention was pretty later in the game, something like 30 of these, and if you email me I'll dig out the document somewhere, where I have some *Washington Post* and *New York Times* links and then brief descriptions of all these nationally recorded terror alerts, and you'll see that for the most part they are ones where they do not change the color-coded system. And also the color-coded system changed in weird ways over time. So, beginning in Bush's second term, they started, at first it was at a level for the whole country, you know, you were either at orange or yellow or red, and they started doing strange things, like, saying we're raising the alert level on the Eastern seaboard, or we're raising the alert level in New York, Boston, and Philadelphia.

PK: Right, so they bring in these specific, geographical kind of warnings.

RW: Yes, and then they changed the alert level I believe it was the shoe bomber, in fall of 2005, I believe. They then raised the alert level, and then they kept the alert level raised in airports for another like three years, until Obama eliminated the alert system.

PK: Oh right, yes, I think in Britain we call that the Heathrow bomb plot.

RW: Yes, you're right. It was not the shoe bomber, the plot amongst some people in Britain, and they didn't even have tickets yet, it was pretty far off, but nonetheless. Good memory, good memory.

PK: Yes, that's an interesting one from my perspective, that particular warning, because they changed it, it's whether it's a pre-emptive system or a retrospective system, because in that case, they changed it after British authorities had already rounded up these people. So, it kind of undermines the whole warning dimension of it.

RW: Oh it's super weird too, because my understanding the guys didn't even have tickets yet. And so it was confusing why they need to raise the alert level at all. It's more like oh, great, you've foiled a plot, good job.

PK: Absolutely.

RW: So let me just, really quickly, as long as I'm thinking about things that I want to make sure I get on the record to you, the trajectory of criticism of the alert system. So, my sense was, that the first memories of I have of mass-media critiques of the alert system were in the summer of 2004 and they were, one, in Michael Moore's widely, widely viewed *Fahrenheit 9/11* movie, which had a whole five-minute sequence making fun of the terror alert system and how ridiculous it was to try and scare people in rural Oregon, and it had, a couple of congressman also coming out against it. Then, there was also, one of the AP articles that documented my research also included quotes from, people like Howard Dean, who said some sort of critical things. And then in my memory, that sort of broke the bubble and after that you would occasionally hear a critique of it. And there were very, very few uses, I think there were no more uses of nationally announced terror alerts involving the color-coded system before the election. And not really until the British plot in the fall of 2005, I believe, but I can look that up in my documents, because I have pretty thorough documents I believe on, documentation of when they did the national announcements.

PK: Yes, it is strange, the fact like you say, the bubble burst, and, yes, *Fahrenheit 9/11* and Jon Stewart and *Saturday Night Live*, these kind of people start to do satirical critiques.

So you wonder why it had any effect on people, why did it have this effect of boosting Bush in the polls. If people are mocking it and not taking it seriously, why? On some level it must be affecting people.

RW: The time-series of my analysis entirely preceded that mockery, so I don't know about that.

PK: Yes, okay, well I think Jon Stewart, from the records I've seen of his show, he's mocking it pretty much as soon as it comes about in March, 2002. But yes, I think you're right in the sense that the bulk of that criticism probably came a little later.

RW: Yes, I thought so, but maybe you're right that there were these kind of comedy outlets like that that were making fun of it. Yes, I just missed that.

PK: Yes. And let me give you this, I've dug up the quote from Ridge's book, so I'm quoting now: "Indeed, that phenomenon (the phenomenon of Bush getting a boost in the polls), was quantified by a Cornell University study that tracked 131 Gallup polls between 2001 and 2004 (so this is definitely your paper), and found that the president's approval rating increased by nearly 3 percentage points, each time the government issued a terror alert." And then he goes on his book to kind of use that as a justification for the anecdote that you told me earlier, which is where Ridge is saying, "I was in a meeting and Rumsfeld and Ashcroft were telling me to raise the alert even though we didn't think there was justification. So yes, your paper, I can send you over a scan of that page or something, but yes, it's instrumental in constructing Ridge's argument where he's backing up his argument to say that it was manipulated for political reasons.

RW: Yes, well this whole other story of the bizarreness of this being one of the most reported articles in the history of sociology research, it's just completed bizarre how this actually transcended academia. And I was like 27 years old at the time and just found the whole just bizarre, how one of the first, the press release people at Cornell were like we need a good title for you. Because you're quote unquote "a graduate student" and it will totally undermine the newsworthiness of this piece of research. And I was like, "oh, I am the assistant director of the lab that I work in." "What's the name of it?" "Hold on a second", and I put the phone down and went out, outside my lab door to see what was the name I had made up for the lab and put on a sheet of paper like weeks, a few years before then, and I came back, and I was like, "oh yeah, the centre for small group prophecies", and they were like, "okay, that's acceptable". Or maybe not emailing them, but that's good enough, and then two days later, that's smack on the front page of the *Times of India*, like the largest English language newspaper in the second most populous country in the world! And then it's in a *Washington Post* article, like a week later, in fact they're cracking a joke about it, I think this guy Al Kamen is like, "do they have a center for the study of large group prophecies?" And it was like something we wrote up, to have a convincing name for this room! So that was this whole other thing, of just how bizarre the experience was.

PK: Yes, it's terrific. And I think also, that kind of suggests as well that it did kind of capture the zeitgeist, capture a lot of popular conceptions about this system or what Bush was doing, the politics of fear, these things were doing, it became an emblem of that in some ways, the paper.

RW: I think so, and I think it was partly because, despite what you're saying about *The Daily Show*, and *The Daily Show* was a lone oracle of many perspectives at the time, along with like *The Onion*, despite that, there really wasn't a lot of talk about this, because it was still the sort of climate where it would be unpatriotic to talk about something like that. And so, my paper was able to talk about it in a very different way. These are the data, you know, I'm not saying he is in intending to do this, but this is the effect of it, and that kind of. And I think a lot of people mis-understood the paper, too; I think a lot of people took it as evidence for the intent, and it certainly isn't that. We should talk about the last week before the election, too, at some point.

[...]

PK: Yes, I think the more I think about it, the Jon Stewart criticisms, they're very, very flippant, they mock the colours and they say isn't this silly that you can reduce this massive kind of thing to a colour on this alert scale. Because, you know, it's kind of funny to look at in some ways, so I guess the very superficial criticism and satirical denunciations were coming early and then a couple of years, people were digesting it a bit more, your paper was coming out, I think there was a paper from the Congressional Research Service that came out about the same time as yours, a formal analysis of it and some of its limitations and maybe they become markers that people can rally around a bit who want to criticize the system, and who want to criticize Bush.

RW: The very next day, and it actually could be like, yes I believe this is Thursday and Friday before the election, the very next day, a bin Laden tape comes out, which, you may or may not, do you know about this?

PK: Is this the very old tape?

RW: I don't know, yeah, it was taped significantly before the day it came out. Okay, so there were periodically these bin Laden tapes, every [inaudible] months between 9/11 and when he died, pretty much, that's not a precise number that's a rough estimate, and so this tape came out the Friday before the election, and I start getting pummeled with phone calls, from media, and they're mostly the kind of media that are covered on Monday mornings, because it's pretty late, even for the Friday evening and weekend news cycles, and usually when you drop stuff on Friday it really doesn't get covered very much, so somehow this video tape has materialized and it's your typical bin Laden video tape, as I recall, "we're going to destroy America" and he said some thing about the election, too. But I think he was saying he didn't like either Bush or Kerry or something, and so they were like, hey, I was talking to producers at the Today Show and then another morning news show, I'm not remembering who. And these were all phone calls, so I don't have a record of this, unfortunately. But, they were saying, "we don't know how we're going to handle this", similar to the report the day before, "we don't know how to handle this, we don't really want to make a huge deal about it, because it's so close to the election, but it does seem newsworthy, we're going to thought-peddle it, but we're going to keep you on the line because if it becomes a big story over the course of the weekend, we want to bring you down to New York and into the studio on Monday, and I was like, yes, okay, whatever, you might want to bring me down Sunday, but sure, sure, whatever you need, and they were saying, "and we don't think that the White House is going to make a big deal about it, because we just talked to them, and they said they're getting hammered on the terror alerts issue, so, they don't think they're going to make a big deal out of it." And I was like, "oh, that's weird, my article and Howard Dean's quote." That's like a very specific set of things, that made them say that. So, then the election happens, and Bush wins, and since then you occasionally hear people speculate, saying Osama bin Laden's video tape affected the election. And I don't really know, it was a little different than what I studied, it wasn't the government going out there and saying everybody needs to be scared. Everybody has a reason to be scared, there's a terror alert happening, or a terror threat happening in the US now, it was a little different, a bin Laden video tape, I didn't analyse the effects of bin Laden video tapes. My guess is they would have roughly the same effect, but then again not a lot of undecided voters left, either at that point, so did it have an effect on this really, really close election, I really don't know, but I believe I heard, I want to say Kerry had said that he thought it did.

PK: Yes, that rings a faint bell with me as well, that Kerry comes out and says, "if this video hadn't come out, we'd have been home and dry", or, you know, we'd have done a lot better.

RW: I want to say I saw one analysis, also, and there's no way you could do this analysis, as nicely as you would like to, but I believe I saw one analysis say that there was a turn in the last minute levels of approval for Bush following the bin Laden video tape. And I say that, and if you email me, I'll do my best to try and figure out and find it, but I can't remember, off the top of my head where I saw that, but I could maybe find it if you emailed me the request.

PK: So, very quickly just to finish, why, this is probably easier for you to answer, who's more familiar with the American political scene than I am, but why, why would there be this, why does saliency of terrorism have this effect on Bush? Why would it have boosted him in the polls? Just in a general way.

RW: Okay, so in my paper I weight in on a bunch of different possibilities, but there is a relatively well established finding in the social psychology literature, well, sorry the political science literature called the 'rally round the flag' effect, which is that people get more patriotic and support leaders associated with their nation or group during times of significant inter-group conflict.

PK: Right, yes, so the elder Bush has a massive boost after the first Gulf War.

RW: Exactly, and that's the second highest approval rating on record, behind the 9/11 one, and what's the common thread here, once inter-group conflict is sparked, via an attack or a war, you support your group more, you feel more animosity to out groups. And this has been show in political science, the 'rally round the flag' effect, or rally effect for short, it's been shown in psychology, under the heading social identity theory, which is a theory that I use in my paper, and then, I give a more thorough discussion in a follow up paper that I wrote in 2008, where I'm trying to explain why it would be, that, under some circumstances, well, anyway, I was trying to take the entirety of the 'rally round the flag' literature, which, sometimes, I would say nine times out of ten, finds support for some leaders, and one time out of ten shows rejection of some leaders, the Madrid subway bombing in 2004, so that one led to an ouster of the current government, and so that one, my explanation for that would be, one, there was an attempt to blame it on some group that was seen as conspiratorial on the part of the government, and so that kind of led to backlash, but I also think that there Spanish were not big fans of the way that the government had been doing the war on terror. And this, kind of was like the last straw, it was, you're not doing what we want you to do, and then this even happened despite your tough on terror tactics.

PK: Right, and didn't the opposition party get them out of, they had troops on the ground the Spanish in Afghanistan.

RW: Yes, they were in the Coalition of the Willing.

PK: Yes, and I thought that the opposition there got some of the backing in Spain because they said they would take the troops out.

RW: Right, right, that's very unusual that's called an anti-rally effect, and they're like the one out of ten case that's harder to explain. Anyway, so the whole idea that a terror threat or an attack or a war would support for a standing leader, in particular a president who sort of embodies these engagements in the conflict, that it is a well-documented effect, but also Bush benefited from this before he had even shown that he would be that guy, he got that huge Gallup boost on, pretty much just a day after the attacks, so it wasn't even that necessary for him to be tough on terror, I think that helped, sustain the boost he got from the terrorism issues.

PK: Yes, I wonder if it's exacerbated a bit because Republicans are associated with national security more than the Democrats.

RW: Absolutely. They're going to get that boost. A liberal-Democrat who didn't have that strong national security, pro-military stance, might or might not have. But I think even they probably would, too.

[...]

RW: Yes, this is a totally fascinating topic and I became fascinated with it in part because it came and went. I feel like you're asking me about this nostalgic time that people remember, through totally cloudy lens, a very cloudy lens. People forget that it wasn't just



about the colour-coded system, it was mostly not about that, and people forget that we had this whole period of time, these few years, where these terrorist attacks had happened and, to be honest, they were kind of crazy sometimes, and no one really stood up and critiqued them, except for perhaps *The Daily Show*, which really was this lone voice at the time, and looking back, it's very strange this happened. People also forget about the mass medias coverage of the Iraq war, I mean, blatantly partisan and pro-war. Reporters would just say, "I'm embedded with these troops and we're fighting the good fight, everybody's really excited", it just wasn't journalistic and it was so recently that it kind of dawned...

PK: Yes, I seem to remember *The New York Times* recently wrote a piece and said and kind of apologized for its coverage of the war on terror and kind of said, even us, even *The New York Times*, we really weren't critical enough, we did just kind of tow the party line a little bit.

RW: Yes, it was super strange. It was not that long ago and people don't remember it, and it's interesting, it was not that long ago that people thought that maybe, I mean whispers and a lot people thought maybe this bin Laden video tape turned the 2004 election and it's possible, it's possible. I think one of the biggest things I want to know is, and this is kind of relevant to your research I think, what's the story of that video's arrival? How did it arrive, and in whose hands on that date.

PK: The videotape?

RW: Yes, the bin Laden video tape that came out the Friday before the election. When it's just such perfect timing.

PK: And is that the video tape that changes the alert level? Is there a change in the alert level then?

RW: No, there wasn't.

PK: No, there's another videotape as well that is the cause of the alert level being changed and it turns out afterwards its three years old. And, it's not current at all, and it's the reason they used to change the alert level. But that must be a different instance.

RW: There was another thing like that, where they found a disc or something, yes, they found a disc that had plans for how you could bomb, I want to say major buildings in New York and another city.

PK: Yes, this might be it.

RW: And the intelligence preceded the 9/11 attacks.

PK: Right, yes, that's what I'm thinking of. Yes, and someone clearly just sat on it until they needed.

RW: But yes, I think what you are doing is really important, it's a very interesting period in recent history that feels so distant and I think it's great that you're working on this project. I would be very interested to see the product of your work.

PK: For sure, and as someone it academia I appreciate how difficult it is to get any of your publications noticed, so congratulations on the absolutely overwhelming reaction that paper in 2004 got. I mean, that's almost a section in my thesis just looking at the reception of your paper by yourself I think.

RW: Yes, thanks. It was totally bizarre. And as a result, I have all these different levels at which to tell you this story, like there's the actual story of the research. There's the story of the phenomena the research is documenting, there's a lot of levels of strange stories that I can relate to you, but hopefully I've done a decent job.

## 10. Bibliography

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