

The Department of Homeland Security

It is probably too late to give President Bush advice on the Department of Homeland Security, but I offer this unsolicited suggestion in the interest of non-partisan cooperation and good government.

The President should immediately fire all employees of this amazing proliferation of agencies, a few of which I have never even heard of. The Department of Incident Management? Please! What incidents? How are they managed? The new integrated Department will have 170,000 employees, a preposterous number to direct efficiently. 170,000 people are a small city. To expect that they will now somehow work together to analyze undefined mountains of uncorrelated data with the purpose of finding subversive patterns along the lines of “A Beautiful Mind” is about as likely as getting them to discover the unified field theory of physics. Bureaus do bureau things, namely establish immutable organizations with well defined turfs to be defended to the death. Putting all the small agencies together to make one gargantuan one will only produce bureaucratic Nirvana with fuzzy goals and uncountable jurisdictional boundaries to protect.

Following this obvious maneuver, the president should hire around 100 of the smartest analysts on the planet to do the intended work. They can be found among the actuaries of insurance companies, cryptographic hackers on the Internet and sports reporters on any major newspaper. Bob Ryan on the Boston Globe would be perfect for this job.

Then Mr. Bush should hire no more than 20 world class programmers to be responsible for linking all the relevant data bases, fingerprint labs and department store billing departments in the land. They are likely out of work now due to lack of governmental focus on the economy, so they will jump at the chance.

The Department budget of \$40 billion would be mostly saved. It could be applied to the “No Child Left Behind” education program that the administration has demonstrably left behind. While Republicans will be insanely jealous that they didn’t think of it first they can claim “smaller government”. Democrats, without a good idea in sight, can claim victory for one of their most cherished platform issues.

And President Bush might actually get some results the administration can use to fight terrorism 120 gifted people would be manageable, efficient and motivated. Everybody wins.

And I might get a Nobel Peace Prize.