

*Remarks for the
Homeland Security Website Press Conference
August 16, 2002*

Good morning. Nearly a year ago, our country was attacked by terrorists flying planes into buildings – and we will never be the same because of those attacks. The sense of safety and security that had become so customary was removed, and we found ourselves in a new and unfamiliar situation.

We've recovered somewhat from those first few months of uncertainty, and regained a sense of normalcy in our daily routines. This is an important part of moving on, but we must maintain a sense of vigilance against future threats.

We are here today to announce a new tool to help us do just that. As of today, every Mississippian has the ability to see what's being done regarding homeland security in our state, and what they can do to help with those efforts.

www.homelandsecurity.ms.gov -- That's the address for Mississippi's new homeland security website. It can also be accessed through the Governor's Office website at www.governor.state.ms.us, or the official state website at www.ms.gov.

Designed by the Mississippi Emergency Management Agency and the state's Information Technology Services, this website provides up-to-date information regarding threat status, citizen information, and preparedness facts.

We acted quickly following the events of September 11. We instituted an Incident Command System to ensure all emergency and law enforcement agencies operated efficiently and effectively.

We brought together representatives from local law enforcement, the Mississippi Department of Public Safety, the Mississippi Highway Patrol, the Mississippi Emergency Management Agency, the Department of Environmental Quality, the Federal Bureau of Investigation, the United States Postal Service, the Mississippi Health Department, and the U. S. Attorney's office to coordinate our preparedness efforts.

Simply put, we are prepared. This website is another tool in that preparation. It provides easy access for the people of Mississippi to review the work we're doing and what they can do in their own communities.

By remaining alert, vigilant and aware, we all contribute to the public safety and security.

Mississippi's Director of Homeland Security is Robert Latham, who also serves as executive director of MEMA. Working closely with the Mississippi National Guard and other law enforcement agencies, MEMA – and this Emergency Operations Center we're in right now – will be the nerve center for any situations that may arise in the future.

We hope and pray that day will never come, but in the meantime, preparedness is key. I encourage all Mississippians to visit this new website, read it carefully, and work to ensure the preparedness for their families and communities.

I'd like to ask Robert Latham and Martha Pemberton with ITS to make a few remarks, then we'll be glad to take your questions.