

**Contacts**

**Newark**

Phone: (973) 639-8700  
 Toll Free: (888) 398-1642  
 Fax: (973) 639-8723

**Camden**

Phone: (856) 338-8922  
 Fax: (856) 338-8936

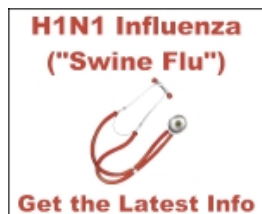
**Washington, DC**

Phone: (202) 224-3224  
 TTY: (202) 224-2087  
 Fax: (202) 228-4054

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Press Release of Senator Lautenberg

Lautenberg Furious Over Initial Plan by Bush to Slash Federal Air Marshals, Shocked That Budget Cuts to Homeland Security Occurring as New Al Qaeda Threats Emerge

Wednesday, July 30, 2003

Washington, D.C. – Senator Frank R. Lautenberg today lashed out at the President for his latest plan to weaken nation’s homeland security by slashing federal funding for Air Marshall Service on commercial airliners at the exact time Al Qaeda has issued new threats to use planes as weapons of terror. In a letter to Bush, Lautenberg hoped the President would reconsider these cuts and restore the funding necessary to keep Americans safe from terror.

"You have to ask yourself: What are they thinking? First, the Administration issues an alarming statement that puts fear into the public, then they want to scale back security on airplanes. Does the left arm know what the right arm is doing over at the Department of Homeland Security?" said Lautenberg.

In a letter sent to the President today, Lautenberg and several of his colleagues expressed alarm over reports that his Administration has decided to remove air marshals from a number of critical cross country flights. The following is an excerpt from the letter.

"This decision by your Administration is especially shocking given the alert issued to the airlines this week warning of impending potential hijackings by terrorists. In fact, in a statement released by the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) yesterday, in an attempt to calm the public, DHS specifically credits "air marshals" as a critical component of increased airline security."

During a press conference just this morning, President Bush said the following to a question on the latest reports of new Al Qaeda threats. "We do know that Al Qaida tends to use the methodologies that worked in the past. That's, kind of, their mindset. And we've got some data that indicates that they would like to use flights -- international flights, for example." – President George W. Bush, Rose Garden news conference, July 30, 2003

"We made a pledge to the American people: that we will put homeland security first. But the Administration is putting tax cuts for the wealthy ahead of protecting everyday American families," said Lautenberg.

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