

Stanley Supinski reflects on the impact of Chris Bellavita's 2008 HSAJ article, “Changing Homeland Security – What is Homeland Security?” on the development of Homeland Security as a field.

By Stanley Supinski

It wasn't until after Sept. 11, 2001 that the term *homeland security* came to the forefront of American consciousness. Because of the attacks, we understandably linked the term to terrorism, particularly terror perpetrated by foreign actors, and to the newly established Department of Homeland Security (DHS) that was formed in the aftermath. A few years later Hurricane Katrina hit, and both DHS and the public recognized that handling natural disasters, in terms of preparedness and managing the consequences, was also a vital part of securing the homeland. I can attest to the fact that virtually every practitioner and academic meeting at the time included a discussion of just what the term meant. In June 2008, Chris Bellavita published this article which aimed to bring some clarity, or at least set some boundaries. He described seven lines of thought regarding the definition:

1. *Terrorism* – homeland security is focused exclusively on the prevention of terrorist attacks within the US, reducing vulnerability, and minimizing the damage and recovering from attacks that do occur;
2. *All Hazards* – it is focused on preventing and disrupting terrorist attacks, protecting against man-made and natural hazards, and responding to and recovering from incidents that do occur;
3. *Terrorism and Catastrophes* – it is what DHS — supported by other federal agencies — does to prevent, respond to, and recover from terrorist and catastrophic events that affect US security;
4. *Jurisdictional Hazards* – it means something different in each jurisdiction. It is a locally-directed effort to prevent and prepare for incidents most likely to threaten the safety and security of its citizens;
5. *Meta Hazards* - it is a national effort to prevent or mitigate any social trend or threat that can disrupt the long-term stability of the American way of life;
6. *National Security* - it is an element of national security that works with the other instruments of national power to protect the sovereignty, territory, domestic population, and critical infrastructure of the United States against threats and aggression;
7. *Security Über Alles* - it is a symbol used to justify government efforts to curtail civil liberties.

Bellavita concluded that “The absence of agreement can be seen as grist for the continued evolution of homeland security as a practice and as an idea.”¹ While our community has matured, these definitions have stood the test of time. This article remains as relevant today as it was in 2008.

About the Author

Stan Supinski is the co-director of Partnership Programs and a faculty member at the Center for Homeland Defense and Security; an associate professor at Long Island University's Homeland Security Management Institute; and has served on the faculty of the University of Massachusetts and University of Denver. He is the former deputy for training and education for the North American Aerospace Defense Command and U.S. Northern Command, where he developed the organization's academic training and education programs; he is also the founder and former director of the Homeland Security/Defense Education Consortium (HSDEC), a network of more than 270 federal, military, and civilian educational institutions. Dr. Supinski has conducted research and authored numerous articles on homeland security and defense, technology support to education, and language acquisition. He holds a PhD in instructional systems design from Florida State University and a master's degree in national security affairs from the Naval Postgraduate School. He may be reached atsbsupins@nps.edu.

Notes

1. Christopher Bellavita, "Changing Homeland Security: What is Homeland Security?" *Homeland Security Affairs* 4, Article 1 (June 2008): 20, <https://www.hsaj.org/articles/118>.
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