



Interagency Security Committee

Background and History

The Interagency Security

Committee (ISC) was created after the Oklahoma City bombing of the Alfred Murrah Federal Building on April 19, 1995—the deadliest attack on U.S. soil before 9/11—and the worst domestic-based terrorist attack in U.S. history. A truck packed with explosives was parked in front of the building and detonated. The bomb destroyed the building which housed 17 Federal agencies, and claimed the lives of 168 people. In addition, over 800 people were injured.

The day after the attack, President William Clinton directed the Department of Justice to assess the vulnerability of Federal facilities to acts of terrorism or violence, and to develop recommendations for minimum security standards. Until then, there were no minimum physical security standards for non-military Federally owned or leased facilities.

A working group comprised of security specialists from the Department of Justice (DOJ), the U.S. Marshals Service, the General Services Administration (GSA), the Federal Bureau of Investigation, the U.S. Secret Service, the Social Security Administration, and the Departments of Defense and State developed a report,



the “Vulnerability Assessment of Federal Facilities,” (also known as the Department of Justice Report). The report was published within 60 days, on June 28, 1995. This landmark document created proposed minimum security standards, including:

- Securing perimeter buffer zones
- Developing access procedures for entrances and exits including garages and service entrances
- Identification and admittance of employees and visitors
- Use of closed circuit television monitoring

As a result, various security measures were employed at all Federal buildings in cities across the country.

One of the recommendations in the DOJ Report was creation of the ISC. On October 19, 1995, President Clinton issued Executive Order 12977, creating the Interagency Security Committee (ISC) to address “continuing government-wide security” for Federal facilities. Initially chaired by the Administrator of the General Services Administration (GSA), ISC members represent all of the executive branch agencies, plus the Office of Management and Budget, the Environmental Protection Agency, the Central Intelligence Agency, and others.

On March 5, 2003, President George W. Bush issued Executive Order 13286, which transferred the chairmanship for the ISC from the GSA to the Secretary of Homeland Security. Currently, the DHS

Assistant Secretary for Infrastructure Protection (IP) Robert B. Stephan serves as ISC chair.

Since 1995, many engineering improvements have been put in place at Federal facilities, such as shatter-resistant windows and protective glass films at day-care centers. Today, all new Federal buildings must be constructed with truck-resistant barriers and deep setbacks from the street.

The impact of the Oklahoma City bombing is long-lasting and unforgettable, especially for the families and survivors. There are more than 600 survivors, including 219 children who lost at least one parent. Hundreds of rescue workers, the Oklahoma City community, and the entire nation offered assistance. That tragedy is a constant reminder—and a source of determination—for all Interagency Security Committee members—to ensure that it never happens again.



Alfred P. Murrah Federal Building, Oklahoma City, 1995

Photo courtesy of City of Oklahoma City