

Peter Gadiel
Oversight Hearing on the "Immigration Enforcement Resources Authorized in the
Intelligence Reform and Terrorism Prevention Act of 2004."

Statement of Peter Gadiel

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President, 9/11 Families for a Secure America

**Before the Subcommittee on Immigration, Border Security, and Claims March 3,
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Mr. Chairman and Members of the Subcommittee, thank you for the opportunity to appear before you today to discuss the critical importance of fully funding the additional border security resources authorized by Congress last year in the Intelligence Reform and Terrorism Prevention Act

This act, signed into law by the President on December 17, 2004, was designed to respond to security weaknesses identified by the 9/11 Commission. The congressional debate of the bill, as you know, was particularly contentious. Not once during that debate, however, did I hear any Member of Congress or the Administration question the need for the 10,000 additional Border Patrol agents, 4,000 additional ICE investigators, and 40,000 additional detention beds. In a December 6 letter to the House-Senate conferees negotiating the bill, President Bush said: "I also believe the conference took an important step in strengthening our immigration laws by, among other items, increasing the number of border patrol agents and detention beds." The need for these extra resources is obvious. As the 9/11 Commission's staff put it in the opening line of their monograph on *9/11 and Terrorist Travel*: "terrorists cannot plan and carry out attacks in the United States if they are unable to enter the country."

Like the other 9/11 families, I was shocked to read that the President's budget proposal included funding for only 210 additional Border Patrol agents, 143 additional ICE investigators, and 1,920 additional detention beds. Every 9/11 family member I have

spoken with over the past three years understands that their loved ones died because our government failed to live up to its most basic obligation to its citizens: to protect us from foreign attack.

We know there were intelligence failures leading up to 9/11. We know that complacent government officials simply refused to believe that something like 9/11 could happen here. More than anything else, though, we know that our government failed to maintain control of our borders leading up to 9/11.

Those 19 murderers counted on lax scrutiny of their visa applications and overwhelmed inspectors at our ports of entry. Once here, the terrorists counted on being able to hide in plain sight in the ocean of 10 million or more illegal aliens living in the United States.

They benefited from the fact that enforcement of immigration laws inside the United States is virtually nonexistent and that Americans are so inured to this fact that no one -- civilian or law officer -- would notice them or interfere as they planned, rehearsed, financed, and then carried out their conspiracy to commit mass murder.

They were free to obtain US identity documents, rent apartments and vehicles, open bank accounts, sign up for flight lessons, and then board airplanes with the drivers' licenses so obligingly issued to them in Virginia, Florida and New Jersey.

This failure to enforce existing immigration laws both at our borders and within the United States, along with the plethora of incentives, benefits and services we offer to illegal aliens, led directly to the 9/11 attacks and the death of my son and three thousand other innocents.

We, who lost so much on that day, simply cannot understand why some in our government are still questioning the need for adequate resources, especially manpower, to control who is permitted to enter our country. These government officials tell us that truly securing our borders would endanger our freedom, as if having open borders -- where ANYONE, including terrorists, can freely enter our country -- somehow protects our freedom. They tell us that they can protect us from terrorism without disrupting illegal immigration, as if terrorists will somehow look different and so stand out. They

tell us that we must accept amnesty in order to bring illegal aliens out of the shadows and register them, as if we didn't know with certainty that terrorist "sleepers" will take advantage, just as Mahmud Abouhalima did in 1986, after which he used his new green card to obtain terrorist training so he could drive a vanload of explosives into the World Trade Center in 1993.

At a hearing before the Senate Select Committee on Intelligence on February 16, Adm. James Loy, Deputy DHS Secretary, testified that:

...entrenched human smuggling networks and corruption in areas beyond our borders can be exploited by terrorist organizations. Recent information...strongly suggests that al-Qaida has considered using the Southwest Border to infiltrate the United States. Several al-Qaida leaders believe operatives can pay their way into the country through Mexico and also believe illegal entry is more advantageous for operational security reasons. However, there is no conclusive evidence that indicates...operatives have made successful penetrations...via this method.

We have learned that in the weeks prior to 9/11 there were many indications that al-Qaida was planning terrorist attacks using commercial jetliners. It appears that many in our government failed to act because they lacked "conclusive proof" as to time, date, or place. For the 9/11 families, our "conclusive proof" was watching, along with the rest of the country, as our loved ones suffered hideous and often agonizing deaths.

Shortly after the 9/11 attacks, President Bush stood on the ruins of the World Trade Center, the only tomb my son will ever know, and said: "I hear you." I sincerely hope that's true, because time is not on our side and it is unlikely that we will have "conclusive proof" before the next attack either. We cannot afford to wait any longer before we take border security seriously.

9/11 FSA fought last year in support of H.R. 10 with its border and identity security provisions. We were met in the Senate with the usual protests by opponents of real reform: "Not this. Not now. Not here." As a result of Senate opposition, most of the border and document security provisions we supported were stripped from the final bill, even though they were supported by the 9/11 Commission's work. Thankfully, the final bill did retain substantial increases in authorized Border Patrol agents, ICE agents, and

detention beds. But now that it is time to fund those increases we again hear: “Not this. Not now. Not here.”

To those who oppose the increases we ask: If not now, when? If not this, what? And if not here on our borders, where? How much more “conclusive proof” will it take?