

Policy Memo 2

150 points, due 7 Mar 06

Assignment:

You are a staffer in the Emergency Preparedness and Critical Infrastructure Protection Directorate in the Homeland Security Council.

Terrorists successfully execute nearly simultaneous attacks against two privately owned U. S. industrial chemical facilities (using high yield explosives) and a Monday night football game (three suicide bombers). Total casualties approach 5,000 dead and wounded, of which 140 dead and 210 wounded were a result of the suicide bombings. As facts about the attacks emerge, it quickly becomes clear that the key steps that would have had the greatest chance of preventing, deterring or mitigating the attacks would have required action by the private sector owners, not the government.

The President has asked the Homeland Security Advisor to report to him within seven days, and provide specific recommendations on how to compel, require, and/or provide incentives and disincentives to ensure necessary private sector action in the future. The President asks you to do so in a way that will limit significant long-term harm to the domestic economy, nor significantly erode America's global competitiveness.

The Homeland Security Advisor asks you to prepare a memo providing your recommendations, with supporting analysis, for her consideration prior to her meeting with the President.

Administrative Requirements:

3 pages; single spaced; Times New Roman; one inch margins; no cover page; don't number paragraphs; no page number on page one; include page numbers on pages 2 and up, centered at the bottom of the page. For matters of style, refer to William Strunck, Jr. and E.B. White, *The Elements of Style*, Fourth Edition (Boston, MA: Allyn and Bacon, 2000).

Follow the format and guidance in the policy memo format posted on the website (similar to memos prepared in the White House and many government agencies, most of which are usually about three pages, though sometimes longer if appropriate). The website also includes an example of a policy memo written in graduate school. You can include a lot of analysis in 2-3 pages. Your memo should provide analysis and recommendations, not simply summarize facts or issues.

Coordinating Requirement:

Since this question involves important economic issues, you need to coordinate your memo with the President's Council of Economic Advisors and the National Economic Council.

For the purpose of this assignment, "coordination" entails contacting an Economics instructor of your choice in the Department of Social Sciences (in person, via phone, or via email), asking them to briefly review your recommendations and provide feedback (in person or via email), and then incorporating their feedback into your final submission. You must effect such coordination not later than 3 March 06. A portion of your grade will reflect the Economic instructor's assessment of how well you incorporated their feedback.

Some Pointers on Writing Effective Policy Memoranda:

You don't necessarily need to satisfy every one of these pointers in your submission, but this list is based on experience and should prove helpful):

- Make it clear why the official is reading the memo.
- State your main point clearly up front.
- Use an effective title.
- Provide up front a "roadmap" for the rest of the memo.
- Use sub-headings that reinforce the "roadmap" and main argument.
- Make your memo as readable and quickly digestible as possible, while still including whatever level of detail and analysis are necessary -- don't oversimplify complex issues.
- Don't just dissect the problem -- provide solutions.
- Show how your recommendations will improve the current situation.
- Don't assume more or less familiarity with the issue than the official is likely to have.
- Think about the full dimensions of the problem.
- Think beyond the present . . . consider the future.
- Don't neglect the politics. Consider opposition.
- Discuss implementation.

- Be wary of adjectives, especially "clearly" and "obviously," which can backfire at the expense of your credibility. What if it's not clear or obvious to the official? If you say that "clearly, action is needed," and the official doesn't act, then you've (a) questioned their judgment, and/or (b) impugned the quality of your advice. Similarly, rare are the circumstances that you should tell an official that they "must" do something, though there are times when strong recommendations are necessary.
- Consider the consequences of non-action, if appropriate.
- Provide alternatives, if appropriate.