

The Myth of Homeland Security

MARCUS J. RANUM



THE MYTH *of* HOMELAND SECURITY

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著者:Ranum, Marcus J.

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Critical Thinking About True Homeland Defense, this book explains what's wrong with

today's homeland security policy and why it might (or might not) be fixable

"As I write this, I'm sitting in a restaurant in a major U.S. airport, eating my breakfast with a plastic knife and fork. I worked up quite an appetite getting here two hours early and shuffling in the block-long lines until I got to the security checkpoint where I could take off my shoes, remove my belt, and put my carry-on luggage through the screening system"

"What's going on? It's homeland security. Welcome to the new age of knee-jerk security at any price. Well, I've paid, and you've paid, and we'll all keep paying-but is it going to help? Have we embarked on a massive multibillion-dollar boondoggle that's going to do nothing more than make us feel more secure? Are we paying nosebleed prices for "feel-good" measures?

"This book was painful to write. By nature, I am a problem solver. Professionally I have made my career out of solving complex problems efficiently by trying to find the right place to push hard and make a difference. Researching the Department of Homeland Security, the FBI, CIA, INS, the PATRIOT Act, and so forth, one falls into a rabbit's hole of interdependent lameness and dysfunction. I came face to face with the realization that there are gigantic bureaucracies that exist primarily for the sole purpose of prolonging their existence, that the very structure of bureaucracy rewards inefficiency and encourages territorialism and turf warfare."

Packed with vivid stories and examples, this book exposes the bad ideas that have already been implemented in the government's efforts to develop new procedures for airline security, to stop terrorists from hacking into secret databases, and to communicate with the public about threats. He demonstrates how current policies downplay low-tech threats and social engineering, focus on immigration while overlooking the "nuts" already among us, ignore dangerous defects in the government's own computer security, and are hampered by interagency bickering and corporate self-dealing.

He then presents ideas for change, but argues that homeland security will always be a matter of degree, and not an absolute. This is a problem that is by its nature insolvable, but which at the same time cannot be ignored. Writing with anger, honesty, and true patriotism, Ranum reveals the truth about "feel-good" security policies and boondoggle spending programs that mask real threats and do nothing tangible to improve public safety.

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