



**Homeland
Security**

Public Affairs Guidance

April 20, 2011

BACKGROUND

For federal, state, local, tribal, territorial and private sector communicators:

- On April 20, 2011 Secretary of Homeland Security Janet Napolitano will announce the implementation of the National Terrorism Advisory System or NTAS. This DHS Public Affairs Guidance (PAG) provides NTAS topline messages, background, and process information to assist public information officers with the transition from HSAS to NTAS.
- Under this new system, DHS will coordinate with other federal entities to issue formal, detailed alerts to the public when the federal government receives information about credible terrorist threats.
- These alerts will include a clear statement that there is an “imminent threat” or “elevated threat.” The alerts also will provide a summary of the potential threat, information about actions being taken to ensure public safety, and recommended steps that individuals and communities, businesses and governments can take.
- NTAS Alerts will be distributed through news media, web, mobile and social media channels to the public.
- Communicators may recall that we provided *initial* public affairs guidance when DHS Secretary Napolitano announced NTAS on January 27, 2011. The January PAG amplified remarks from Secretary Napolitano about the NTAS announcement, detailed a 90 day transition phase from the existing color-coded Homeland Security Advisory System (HSAS) to NTAS, and broadly outlined communicator-specific issues.

NTAS COMMUNICATIONS & COORDINATION QUESTIONS

- **NTAS Media Questions.** You may refer media questions about NTAS to the Department of Homeland Security Office of Public Affairs at (202) 282-8010 or mediainquiry@dhs.gov

- **Communicator NTAS Process Questions.** If you have questions about NTAS communicator processes please contact Jeff Karonis, Director of Incident Communications, DHS Public Affairs (jeff.karonis@dhs.gov).
- **New Media NTAS Questions.** If you have questions about NTAS New Media or web-specific issues in the transition from HSAS to NTAS please contact Chris Stelmarski, DHS Public Affairs (chris.stelmarski@dhs.gov).

NTAS PAG REFERENCE MATERIALS

- **Topline NTAS Messages, NTAS Background, and Details on NTAS Alerts**
- **Public Area NTAS Transition Signage**
- **New Media and Web master NTAS information**
- **DHS Press Release on NTAS (separate from PAG)**
- **NTAS Guide (Public guide separate from PAG)**

Topline NTAS Messages

- On January 27, 2011, Secretary Napolitano unveiled the National Terrorism Advisory System (NTAS), which will replace the color-coded Homeland Security Advisory System (HSAS) on April 26, 2011.
- Over the 90-day implementation period the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) has been working closely with our federal, state, local, tribal and private sector partners to implement a system that meets the needs of the public and our partners.
- NTAS is built on a clear and simple premise: When a threat develops that could impact you – the public – we will tell you. We will provide whatever information we can so you know how to protect yourselves, your families, and your communities.
- Security is a shared responsibility and DHS recognizes that the best security strategy is one that gets Americans involved and counts on the public as a key partner in securing our country.
- Under NTAS, DHS will coordinate with other federal entities to issue formal, detailed alerts when the federal government receives information about a specific or credible terrorist threat.
- Alerts will be broadly issued via official channels, media channels and directly to the public. They may also be sent directly to law enforcement or affected areas of the private sector.
- Alerts will provide a concise summary of the potential threat—clearly indicating whether a threat is “elevated” or “imminent”—and providing information about actions being taken to ensure public safety, as well as recommended steps that

individuals, communities, businesses and governments can take to protect themselves to help prevent, mitigate or respond to the threat.

- Given the persistent and evolving nature of our current threat environment, it is important to remember that credible threats – the kind that will result in an NTAS Alert – by their very nature will not develop at regular, predictable or frequent intervals.

NTAS Background

- From Day One, this Administration has operated on the premise that security is a shared responsibility and we all play a role in keeping America safe.
- In July 2009, Secretary Napolitano formed a bipartisan task force of security experts, state and local elected, law enforcement and emergency management officials, and other key stakeholders to assess the effectiveness of the color-coded Homeland Security Advisory System (HSAS).
- The results of this assessment formed the basis of the National Terrorism Advisory System (NTAS).
- Since January, we have been working with our partners in federal government, state and local government, law enforcement, the private and non-profit sectors, airports, and other transport hubs to transition to this new system.
- NTAS will more effectively communicate information about terrorist threats by providing timely, detailed information to the public, government agencies, first responders, airports and other transportation hubs, and the private sector.
- This new system is built on a clear and simple premise: When a threat develops that could impact you – the public – we will tell you. We will provide whatever information we can so you know how to protect yourselves, your families, and your communities.
- As a nation, we are always facing persistent and evolving threats. The lack of an NTAS Alert at any particular time certainly doesn't mean the terrorist threat has gone away.
- However, this new system moves away from simply describing the general threat picture to informing the public about credible threats.

Details on NTAS alerts:

- NTAS Alerts may include specific information, if available, about the nature of the threat, including the geographic region, mode of transportation, or critical infrastructure potentially affected by the threat

- The alerts will also include, where possible and applicable, actions being taken to ensure public safety, and steps that individuals and communities can take to protect themselves and help prevent, mitigate or respond to the threat.
- The alerts will clearly indicate whether the threat is “Elevated,” warning of a credible terrorist threat against the United States, or “Imminent”, warning of a credible, specific, and impending terrorist threat against the United States.
- NTAS Alerts have a “sunset provision,” meaning that individual threat alerts will be issued with a specified end date. Alerts may then be extended if new information becomes available or if the threat evolves significantly.
- Alerts will be issued more broadly to the American people through both official and media channels—including a designated DHS webpage (www.dhs.gov/alerts) and via Twitter @NTASAlerts.
- NTAS Alerts will also be tailored specifically to our partners in federal government, state and local government, law enforcement, the private and non-profit sectors, airports, and other transport hubs if the threats specifically pertain to them.

PUBLIC AREA NTAS TRANSITION SIGNAGE

- On April 20 airport authorities and other venues around the country will start posting signage announcing NTAS and replacing the color code threat images. We expect that these materials will be posted for at least several months to assure a broad public education about the new NTAS system.
- If states desire a copy of the signage please send an email to sara.kuban@dhs.gov and we will provide an electronic copy of the poster.

NEW MEDIA AND WEBMASTER NTAS INFORMATION

- This guide provides materials to assist new media practitioners and public affairs web professionals with the transition from HSAS to NTAS.

Website and Online Properties

- The Department has developed three methods for webmasters to incorporate NTAS into their website. All developer information is available at:
<http://www.DHS.gov/files/programs/ntas-developer-resources.shtm>
 - By placing a gif graphic on their page that will automatically change to reflect whether there is an alert issued.
 - By placing an iframe embed code that contains a widget that will automatically update to reflect when there is an alert issued.

- By using the NTAS API in the form of an XML feed that will contain all alert details for syndication on web, mobile properties and electronic signage.
- The Department encourages websites to syndicate content automatically via the API and to not duplicate alert content. This ensures that the content on your website is always up to date with the newest information being released by the Department.

Social Media

- The Department will be alerting the public to new NTAS Alerts via the following social media avenues:
 - Official NTAS Dedicated Twitter Account – <http://twitter.com/NTASAlerts>
 - Official NTAS Dedicated Facebook Account - <http://facebook.com/NTASAlerts>
- Organizations and individuals are encouraged to rebroadcast (whether repost, retweet, etc) NTAS Alerts from official social media channels to their networks while keeping links back to DHS and official NTAS pages and properties intact.
- Additional social media channels may be added at a later time as appropriate.

Branding and Collateral

- High resolution NTAS graphics can be found at www.dhs.gov/files/programs/ntas-web-resources.shtm

Additional Guidance and Support

- For any questions relating to NTAS related New Media or Web questions contact: Chris Stelmarski, Office of Public Affairs, Department of Homeland Security, chris.stelmarski@hq.dhs.gov

New Media and Web Master NTAS Frequently Asked Questions

- **What will happen to the current HSAS graphic?**

If you are currently embedding the HSAS graphic on your site (http://www.dhs.gov/threat_level/current_new.gif) that graphic will be replaced with an NTAS graphic at the end of the implementation period. If you are “hot linking” that file, you will not need to change anything.

- **What will the new NTAS badge consist of?**

The new NTAS badge will contain the NTAS logo, URL (<http://www.dhs.gov/alerts>) and will indicate whether there is currently an active alert or not.

- **Where will I find NTAS Alerts when they are posted?**

All NTAS Alerts will be posted on <http://www.dhs.gov/alerts>

- **What should I put on my website?**

We encourage you to place our NTAS badge or create your own badge using DHS approved branding. Please visit <http://www.dhs.gov/files/programs/ntas-web-resources.shtm> for vector (EPS), Photoshop and JPEG versions of NTAS graphics.

- **Is there a way to receive an NTAS Alert feed?**

An NTAS XML feed is available at <http://www.dhs.gov/files/programs/ntas-developer-resources.shtm>.

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