



THE UNITED STATES CONFERENCE OF MAYORS

1620 EYE STREET, NORTHWEST
WASHINGTON, D.C. 20006
TELEPHONE (202) 293-7330
FAX (202) 293-2352
TDD (202) 293-9445
URL: www.usmayors.org/uscm

***ARE WE PREPARED?
MEASURING THE IMPACT OF PREPAREDNESS GRANTS SINCE 9/11***

STATEMENT BY

**THE HONORABLE WILLIAM EUILLE
MAYOR OF ALEXANDRIA, VA
ON BEHALF OF THE UNITED STATES CONFERENCE OF MAYORS**

**BEFORE THE
SUBCOMMITTEE ON EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT, INTERGOVERNMENTAL
RELATIONS, AND THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA
COMMITTEE ON HOMELAND SECURITY AND GOVERNMENT AFFAIRS
UNITED STATES SENATE**

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Chairman Begich, Ranking Member Paul, and members of the Committee, I am Bill Euille, Mayor of Alexandria, VA. I appreciate the opportunity to testify before you on the suite of homeland security grant programs and how they have helped my city and region, along with cities across the country to prevent, mitigate, prepare for, and respond to both acts of terrorism and natural disasters.

Senator Begich, we especially appreciate the way you have continued to reach out to mayors and represent our interests and those of our cities in so many different areas since your office moved from city hall to the nation's capital. We know that you have not forgotten where you came from and that in you we have a real friend in the Senate.

My basic message today is that mayors and other local officials across the nation strongly support the existing menu of homeland security programs. As I believe my testimony will show, they are working. We recognize that they may not be perfect and some changes may be needed, but they are the product of years of work by Congress, the Administration, state and local governments, and first responders. The federal grant funds which the Department of Homeland Security and its Federal Emergency Management Administration have provided clearly have improved the nation's planning, mitigation, preparedness, prevention, response, and recovery capabilities.

Particularly important is the incentive they provide for federal, tribal, state, territorial and local jurisdictions to work together. By planning, training, and conducting exercises together, local fire chiefs, police chiefs, sheriffs, public health officials, emergency managers, and state and federal officials are able and ready to work together when an incident happens. This pre-planning and coordination prevents confusion, and directly saves lives.

Increased Local Response Capabilities Resulting from DHS Investments

The April 15 bombing at the Boston Marathon provides an excellent example of how DHS investments provided through the Urban Area Security Initiative program have paid off. There can be no doubt that they contributed significantly to the Boston area's quick and effective response to this horrific act of terrorism. Specifically, grant funds were used to:

- **Increase communications interoperability** through the purchase of new portable radios and of new mobile radios for every first responder in the region; the development and maintenance of one of the first shared radio channel plans for public safety first responders (police, fire, and EMS) within the nine cities and towns in the region; the development and support of the Boston Area Ambulance Mutual Aid Radio Network which allowed communications between private ambulance companies and Boston EMS as they treated and transported approximately 282 victims to nearby hospitals; and the development and support of the Boston Area Police Emergency Radio Network which enables most first responders in the region to communicate with agencies from other jurisdictions and during the incident for operational and field communications across jurisdictions after the bombings and for the manhunt operations.
- **Facilitate intelligence and information sharing** by providing salaries for nine intelligence and GIS analysts and equipment (e.g., television screens, computers, surveillance, Sensitive Compartmented Information Facility) within the Boston Regional Intelligence Center. These assets were critical in protecting and providing information to the first responders in the field. The analysts monitored, vetted, and triaged information concerning over 280 suspicious or criminal acts within Boston. In addition, they provided risk assessments on potential infrastructure targets, reviewed videos and social media for leads, and coordinated resources. For the presidential visit on Thursday, the analysts also provided pre-event threat assessments. After the capture of the bombing suspects, the BRIC tracked 42 potential and scheduled events, such as vigils and protests. In addition BRIC analysts were

able to use the Digital Sandbox System, purchased with UASI funds, to build their risk assessment reports.

- **Provide critical infrastructure and key resources**, including 13 Explosive Ordnance Disposal (EOD) Detection K-9 Units from Boston, Revere, and Quincy which were deployed and assisted with identifying possible explosive devices and patrolling certain areas during the incident; EOD Personal Protective Equipment which the police departments used to protect their officers; EOD Equipment, including EOD robots which were used to search certain areas and respond to suspicious packages and EOD inspection cameras (night vision monoculars) which helped officers to see during the manhunt that began Thursday night; two Tactical Response Vehicles – Ballistic Engineered Armored Response Counter Attack (BearCat) vehicles – which the Boston Police Department used to protect their SWAT personnel as they patrolled streets, searching for the bombing suspects; and a CBRNE Mobile Command Vehicle which was used to transport Special Operations Division Tactical and Command personnel to the incident site and support on-scene intelligence sharing and investigations among first responders and transmit information to off-site locations. This vehicle was deployed for the marathon event and after the bombings was used for securing the incident site and then was moved to Watertown during the manhunt operations there.
- **Enhance planning and community preparedness** by providing a shelter trailer which was deployed to the family assistance center that served as a shelter Monday night; a Mass Notification System, ALERT Boston, which is the city's emergency notification system and which was used to send a message to the public informing them to shelter-in-place during the manhunt; Variable Message Sign Boards, which were posted at the marathon and in Watertown for the manhunt operations to inform the public of safety messages; and light towers, which were used at the crime scene for evidence collection during the night.

Among other examples of what investments made through homeland security grant programs have accomplished:

- The Tucson area has received funding from the Metropolitan Medical Response System (MMRS) since 1999. This funding has paid for planning, equipment and training to help first responders, public health, private health, law enforcement, and emergency managers across Southern Arizona prepare for a mass-casualty event. The training, equipment and exercises funded by the MMRS program played a major role in the effective interdisciplinary response to the January 8, 2011 shooting of Representative Gabrielle Giffords and 19 others.
- In Illinois, funding from the State Homeland Security Program (SHSP) has helped to strengthen its Mutual Aid Box Alarm System (MABAS), one of the nation's premier mutual aid systems. The system is composed of over 1,100 fire agencies and can mobilize approximately 38,000 firefighters and paramedics to respond to an event in the State of Illinois. Approximately 800 times per year, the MABAS is activated to help jurisdictions respond in their areas. In addition, the MABAS has been used to deploy resources to interstate disasters, such as Hurricanes Katrina, Gustav, and Ike and last year's river flooding in Missouri and Illinois.
- With support from DHS, there are now 300 state and local teams with technical rescue capability. After the April 2011 deadly tornadoes, Alabama was able to rely on state and local resources for search and rescue operations, instead of requesting federal urban search and rescue support.

The Experience in Alexandria and the National Capital Region

I would now like to share with you some of our experiences in my own city of Alexandria and in the National Capital Region, of which we are a part. As you know the National Capital Region (NCR) encompasses the District of Columbia, Suburban Maryland, and Northern Virginia. We have learned lessons from the various incidents which have occurred and based on those lessons have increased our capabilities to protect against future occurrences:

- After 9/11 the City and our regional partners used lessons learned from our response to the Pentagon incident in the investment decisions we made for the use of both local tax funds and funds received through federal grants. For example, to improve our preparedness in Alexandria, in 2003 we increased our emergency management office from one employee to four using local tax dollars. We used UASI and State Homeland Security Grant Funds to train and equip first responders and to purchase alert and warning systems for the community.
- Using real world experiences like Hurricane Isabel to inform our investment decisions, we have used UASI funds to increase regional planning and coordination, including the development of the NCR Regional Emergency Coordination Plan and the NCR Mutual Aid Operations Plan.
- Our experiences with the Anthrax attack that involved letters sent to Members of Congress and media in D.C., New York, and Florida in 2001 led to UASI investments in secure and interoperable communications, information sharing, and situational awareness in the region. These investments produced NCR Net, a secure fiber optic network connecting the NCR jurisdictions; Essence, a public health surveillance system; and the installation of chemical/biological sensors in the Metro System.
- The D.C. Sniper incident led to UASI investments in license plate readers and automated fingerprint identification systems as well as increased staffing intelligence centers, which have improved our law enforcement capabilities.
- Lessons from Hurricane Katrina led our region to use UASI funding for investments in the Regional Integrated Transportation Information System that informs evacuation decisions, for purchase of mass care supplies for increased sheltering capacity, and for training thousands of volunteers to support critical missions during disasters.

The support which Congress has provided has enabled local officials in our area to significantly advance the preparedness of the entire region. The City of Alexandria and the entire National Capital Region continue to pursue increased capabilities so that they can meet the full spectrum of homeland security and emergency management needs. Your continued direct support to Alexandria and to other communities across America is needed if we are going to be successful in our efforts to protect our citizens at the local level.

The National Preparedness Grant Program Proposal

As you are well aware, in both its FY 2013 and FY 2014 budget submissions the Administration proposed a major reform and consolidation of FEMA's homeland security grant programs which would replace the current programs with a new National Preparedness Grant Program. It is no secret that the U.S. Conference of Mayors and other organizations which represent local governments, first responders, and emergency managers have registered serious concerns with the proposal to convert the current suite of homeland security grant programs into state-administered block and competitive grant programs in which funding decisions are based on state and multi-state threat assessments.

While we appreciate the fact that FEMA made changes in its FY 2014 budget proposal in response to some of the concerns raised by the Conference of Mayors and others, the proposal still contains several items of concern, including collapsing all of the current programs into a consolidated program which would no longer guarantee the retention of key programs, removal of the 25 percent set-aside for law enforcement terrorism prevention, and expanding the eligible applicants for the portion of the funds which must be passed through to local governments to include port and transit authorities and private organizations.

We especially appreciate the fact that thus far Congress has rejected the Administration's proposed changes to the homeland security grant programs and agreed with us that those changes must be considered by the authorizing committees. We know that you will carefully examine any proposals they send to you.

The U.S. Conference of Mayors and other organizations which represent local governments, first responders, and emergency managers have urged FEMA and the Administration to work with us and with the Congress to develop program reforms which incorporate the successful elements of past and current programs and identify new approaches which can have broad support. We further urge that any reform proposals protect certain key programs, including the Urban Area Security Initiative, State Homeland Security Grant Program, and port and transit security grants, which provide targeted funding to local areas and critical infrastructure considered to be at the highest risk.

Principles for Program Improvement

Finally, we suggest that as it works with Congress and stakeholders to improve its programs, FEMA use the following set of core principles developed by our coalition of local organizations:

Increase Transparency – It must be clear and understandable to the federal government and the public how the states are distributing funds, why they are making these decisions, and where the funds are going.

Increase Local Involvement – Local government officials, including emergency managers and emergency response officials, know best the threats and vulnerabilities in their areas. The Threat Hazard Identification Risk Assessment (THIRA) process must include the input of local elected and emergency response officials, and the Federal Emergency Management Administration (FEMA) must be able to audit states by comparing local risk assessments to the state level THIRA. Further, local governments should have the opportunity to challenge a state THIRA that inadequately reflects their needs or input.

Provide Flexibility with Accountability – Any changes to the existing federal grant programs should allow federal funding to meet individual local needs, and preparedness gaps as identified at the local level. Effective but sometimes less politically popular programs, like mitigation, must still receive funding.

Protect Local Funding – Since event impact and response are primarily local in nature, grant funding should support primarily local prevention and preparedness efforts, as is the case under the current program structure. It is important that the vast majority of federal homeland security grants continue to fund local prevention and response activities, including local emergency managers and first responders, and activities that support their preparedness efforts.

Sustain Terrorism Prevention - The current emphasis on supporting law enforcement's terrorism prevention activities must be maintained. The federal grant funds should not be used to support larger

state bureaucracies at the expense of operational counter terrorism preparedness, threat analysis, and information sharing activities.

Provide Incentives for Metropolitan Area Regionalization – While FEMA’s proposal focuses on states and multi-state regions (similar to the FEMA regions), the homeland security grants must also support preparedness in metropolitan intra-state and inter-state regions, such as the National Capital Region.

Conclusion

As this Committee considers the suite of homeland security grant programs and possible reforms to them, I urge you to increase, not decrease, local involvement and flexibility. Local officials know best the threats they face, and they know best the gaps which exist in community preparedness. The homeland security grant programs should support primarily local prevention and preparedness efforts since disaster impacts and response are local in nature.

I appreciate the opportunity to testify before you today on this issue of vital importance to me, my city and my region, and to all local officials, emergency managers, and first responders across the nation. We look forward to working with you to ensure the transparency, efficiency, and effectiveness of homeland security grants.