

Statement of

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Mother of 24 year-old, Bradley James Fetchet

who perished in the World Trade Center attacks on September 11,
2001

before the

United States Senate Committee on
Homeland Security and Government Affairs

Hearing on Ensuring Full Implementation of the
9/11 Commission's Recommendations

Tuesday, January 9, 2007

Dirksen Senate Office Building, Rm. 342
Washington, D.C.

INTRODUCTION

Good morning, Mr. Chairman, Ranking Member Collins, members of this distinguished committee. I am honored to testify today at this vitally important hearing on ensuring full implementation of the 9/11 Commission recommendations.

My name is Mary Fetchet. I am Founding Director of Voices of September 11th. As you know, my husband and I suffered the ultimate loss as parents – when our 24 year old son Brad was tragically killed in Tower II of the World Trade Center that fateful day. Like many Americans, my sense of security and my faith in our government's effectiveness was shattered on September 11th. I sit before you today, once again, filled with renewed hope that in the new Congress your committee will take the opportunity to address “the unfinished business” identified in the December 5, 2005 final report card of the 9/11 Public Discourse Project.

I have made a personal commitment to advocate for the full implementation of the 9/11 Commission recommendations driven by the “wake-up” call when my son was senselessly murdered by terrorists on 9/11. It is my personal belief that almost 6 years later our country remains vulnerable, and although some progress has been made, much work remains ahead. We collectively – the administration, congress, government agencies and interested

individuals - have a moral obligation and responsibility to work together to ensure our government is taking the necessary steps to make our country safer.

Although I am adamant that the 9/11 Commission recommendations must be implemented in their entirety, with the limited time available today, I will focus my comments on issues related to preparedness, information sharing, unified incident command, funding based on risk and vulnerability and congressional reform.

PREPAREDNESS

Voices of September 11th conducted a national survey of over 2,000 Americans in August, 2006 that measured their perceptions of preparedness. The results illustrate that few Americans are adequately prepared in their home, their community, their workplace or in the nation at large. 69% of those surveyed rated U.S. preparedness for terrorist attacks as “fair” or “poor”. Local community preparedness (67% fair or poor) and home preparedness fared slightly better (65% fair or poor). The results regarding workplace preparedness were also troubling: 64% of respondents either don’t know about their company’s plan for a natural disaster or terrorist attack or are not confident in it.¹

¹ Voices of September 11th National Survey Conducted by Greenfield Online:
(<http://www.voicesofsept11.org/dev/PDF/VOICESNationalPreparednessSurveyDATA.pdf>)

The survey conducted nearly 5 years after 9/11 paints a sobering picture that despite government programs such as Ready.gov and national promotions of September as preparedness month, little progress has been made post 9/11.

These perceptions are perhaps partly explained by the fact that only 15% of respondents had participated in preparedness training for terrorist attacks or natural disasters. DHS has taken steps in the right direction with its Ready Campaign, which VOICES has actively supported through our website. In particular, the Resolve to be Prepared '07 campaign is a good effort to promote preparedness in the new year. However, I believe the public has not heard enough about the Ready campaign and other resources. DHS should expand its partnership with the other private sector organizations and look for ways to educate the younger generation. The Ready Kids program is a good start, but DHS should explore ways to integrate age-appropriate preparedness education and training into elementary, middle, and high school levels. A modest investment in preparedness now will go far in mitigating the effects of another terrorist attack or natural disaster.

To validate the importance of preparedness in the workplace, I have included the summary from the WTC Evacuation Study conducted by Columbia University. The study surveyed 9/11 survivors and highlights the absence of worker preparedness on 2001 but also

makes recommendations that validate the importance of emergency preparedness and drills for high rise buildings.²

UNIFIED INCIDENT COMMAND CENTER FOR DISASTERS:

Hurricane Katrina demonstrated the need for better coordination of response efforts between federal, state and local agencies in the event of a large-scale terrorist attack or natural disaster.

Congress has moved to fix some of the limitations of the National Incident Management System (NIMS) in the FY 07 DHS budget by requiring state and local training programs and exercises to be aligned with NIMS and working with regional state and local emergency managers to create “an operationally ready, NIMS compliant, incident management system for use by the first responder community that includes redundant 24/7 online capability.”³

Congress must monitor the implementation of these mandates to ensure that disaster response plans at all levels are integrated into NIMS. \$30 million has been allocated for NIMS this year, and Congress must also make sure that this vital program gets the

² The World Trade Center Evacuation Study, Mailman School of Public Health, Columbia University (released 6/6/06)
<http://www.mailman.hs.columbia.edu/CPHP/wtc/documents/Gershon%20NFPA%202006%20Presentation.pdf>

³ H.R.5441: Making appropriations for the Department of Homeland Security for the fiscal year ending September 30, 2007, and for other purposes http://thomas.loc.gov/cgi-bin/cpquery/?&item=&&sid=cp109pOPWa&&refer=&&r_n=hr699.109&&dbname=cp109&&sid=cp109pOPWa&&sel=TOC_512416&

resources it needs to facilitate fully integrated disaster response plans at all levels.

Congress must also verify that the local and state authorities receiving federal homeland security grants have created response plans integrated with NIMS and are conducting realistic training and exercises based on these integrated plans.

Will the federal government be ready to coordinate response efforts for another disaster on the scale of Katrina? Is there a timetable and benchmarks for full integration of state and local plans into NIMS?

Members of VOICES of September 11th attended the TOPOFFS exercises in Connecticut, New Jersey and Washington, D.C. In addition, we are participating in local roundtable planning attended CERT (Citizen Emergency Response Training) training. I have seen firsthand on many levels, the value in preparedness exercises and planning with the broader community which will help us as an organization play an active role in the event of an emergency. My view is that our local and regional emergency response plans have made progress in the five years due to the dedication of volunteers of individuals in our community in collaboration with emergency response agencies, such as the local Red Cross, fire department and police department.

In Connecticut, our state and local responders have made significant strides in preparedness despite limited funding, however, long-term in

the current environment of reduced federal funding and perhaps a lack of focus, progress is beginning to lag behind. In my opinion, and the opinion of our emergency responders, we have made the bare beginnings of preparedness plans. We believe there should be a recommitment by the federal government to enable continued progress so as to not lose the momentum we have gained thus far.

Examples of significant progress:

- Lessons learned from TOP OFF are being implemented.
- Connecticut plans for evacuation and sheltering are taking shape on a regional basis.
- State plans for improved telecommunications assets for emergency responders have started to be documented and exercised. (see attached report)

Examples of areas yet to be addressed:

- Planning by our towns and cities (other than TOP OFF) have been focused on possible emergency situations within their immediate regions. This focus within our “bubbles” has been the result of insufficient funding and emphasis on the need to plan for emergencies beyond our areas.
- TOP OFF was a regional simulation exercise involving state, local and federal agencies and was very expensive to conduct. Because of the limited geographical scope, in the state of CT it had limited benefit in areas beyond New London.

- There have been no initiatives to expand the planning and exercise beyond state borders. For example, in our area of Connecticut almost all the towns in the western panhandle of the state leading to New York City have borders in common with New York State and Westchester County but no planning or exercising for common emergencies has taken place and we are not aware of any that might be planned. We've not even had elementary discussions.
- It's time to think beyond planning for emergencies that would involve our state capital and focus on the coordinated responder needs in the western Connecticut panhandle along with Westchester County and New York City. We need to now move beyond our local and regional "bubbles" to build a broader collaborative effort.
- Planning and training exercises are very expensive for local towns and cities to absorb and it's easy with all the other budget pressures they face to defer the funding of planning and training. Continued federal funding will be required for many years before we are at the required state of readiness.
- This funding must force planning that involves entire metropolitan areas and deals with the evacuation and sheltering needs this will require.
- I would highly recommend that the Department of Homeland security broadens it's September preparedness month to include local, state and federal planning - broadening the local

“bubble” mentality to regional and inter state roundtable planning supported by federal funds.

- The business community must be integrated into planning and training exercises with emergency management teams – both to identify potential resources the business can offer in the event of an emergency ie. food, water and shelter as well as to have open lines of communication when an emergency occurs for evacuation and direction.

The last five years have witnessed only the beginning of what's required to protect the lives of our citizens. Local planning has improved. Regional planning is only beginning. Large metropolitan area planning has not yet begun. This will take a major recommitment in terms of emphasis and federal funding, at a time when public willingness and the will of many of our politicians has diminished.

INTEROPERABLE COMMUNICATIONS

Past research has shown that the subject of interoperability for emergency responders is far from a new topic. Sadly, in 1995 a GAO report called out this vulnerability – and yet tragically the issue was not addressed leading up to 9/11. Interoperability was a key factor in the death of my son and 618 others in the south tower of the WTC buildings on 9/11 and played a part in our slow response to Katrina. As a 9/11 family member wrote me, “It's hard to believe we can put a

man on the moon and we don't have the technology for first responders to communicate in the event of an emergency".

Since 9/11, some progress has been made, but a recent DHS report on interoperable communications showed that only 6 of 75 U.S. cities have optimized their communications procedures and equipment. Cities were judged on operating procedures in place, use of communications systems and how effectively local governments have coordinated in preparation for a disaster. Even New York City ranked 14th out of the 75 areas surveyed. Chicago ranks near the bottom, yet it is clearly as a high risk location.⁴

The report found that while emergency agencies in more than 60 percent of the communities studied had the ability to talk to each other during a crisis, only 21 percent overall showed "the seamless use" of equipment needed to also communicate with state and federal officials.⁵ Fixing this gap and setting a hard deadline for nation-wide operability should be a priority for DHS. It will require a clearly dedicated grant program for emergency communications with guidance on what kind of equipment to buy to ensure interoperability. As it stands now, the free market for communications equipment is an underlying impediment to effective interoperability. State and local authorities are free to purchase whatever equipment they choose

⁴ DHS Report, Tactical Interoperable Communications Scorecards Summary Report and Findings, (<http://www.dhs.gov/xlibrary/assets/grants-scorecard-report-010207.pdf>)

⁵ Associated Press 1/3/06: "Chertoff promises to upgrade emergency communications in 2 years," Devlin Barrett (<http://www.signonsandiego.com/news/nation/terror/20070103-1201-emergencycommunications.html>)

regardless of whether it is compatible with equipment in neighboring areas or federal agencies such as FEMA. DHS must certify that these local agencies are using federal dollars wisely to ensure interoperability, not just to secure equipment.

Congress has passed legislation to transfer spectrum which will be made available in 2009. In addition, Congress must ensure that DHS follow up on its scorecard by helping these localities make measurable progress on communications interoperability in 2007. A follow-up report in 2008 would measure the effectiveness of DHS' leadership in facilitating interoperable communications across the country.

Locally, Region 1 in Connecticut developed a Telecommunications Interoperability plan with the help of state and federal resources. A contractor of the Navy helped with the technical aspects of this plan and its documentation. Those involved feel the exercise, although time consuming, was successful and an example of what needs to be done nation-wide. Even with the federal and state help this effort dominated planning efforts for a year. However most importantly the effort was planned, documented and exercised.

RECOMMENDATION: Most importantly a firm date for nationwide interoperability must be set by the Department of Homeland Security. In addition similar exercises, like the Telecommunications Interoperability plan that I've provided should be tested in other areas of the country and measurements of success be documented and shared. There's a saying amongst emergency management planners

– “The first thing you do in an emergency is throw out the plan and use your training”. This clearly speaks to the importance of emergency planning exercises. Emergency preparedness cannot be a plan sitting in a 3 ring binder, the plan is not effective if it isn’t exercised.

INFORMATION SHARING:

It is important to note that the Intelligence Community has recently lost its leadership with the resignation of DNI Negroponte and the deputy position remains vacant. Currently we have no leadership at the most critical role suggested by the 9/11 Commission. The White House must move quickly to appoint a successor and fill these 2 positions. During the confirmation process, the Senate should take the opportunity to question the new DNI on his goals and plans for benchmarks for success over the next two years at the Intelligence Directorate. Congress should also reinforce the importance of facilitating information sharing, one of the DNI’s most important jobs.

Congress mandated the creation of a comprehensive Information Sharing Environment (ISE) in the Intelligence Reform and Terrorism Prevention Act of 2004. The ISE was slow to begin operation, with limited resources and staff. Reportedly the ISE has picked up speed with the appointment of Ambassador McNamara. It is encouraging that the Information Sharing Environment implementation plan was released in late November 2006. The report contains a two-phase,

three-year plan to implement a comprehensive information sharing network among federal, state, local and tribal authorities.⁶

The ISE Program Manager's position is integral to the continued success of the program. The office should be made permanent and be subject to formal approval by the Senate. The Program Manager must have the authority to issue government wide standards for information sharing. An important part of this authority is the ability to create incentives for improving information sharing as well as impose sanctions for agencies that fail to share information properly.

Institutional loyalty and rivalries over turf and funding are significant impediments to the creation of an effective information sharing network. Congress should look into ways to rotate intelligence professionals among various agencies to reinforce the collaborative nature of the new environment. Congress should also use its oversight powers to create incentives promoting a "culture of information sharing" and break down barriers that hinder it.

The ISE Program Manager is currently exploring ways to streamline the classification system for terror-related intelligence. A March, 2006 GAO report details the 56 different categories currently in use for "sensitive-but-unclassified" information.⁷ Streamlining and

⁶ Information Sharing Environment Program Manager: Information Sharing Environment Implementation Plan (released 11/06) <http://www.ise.gov/docs/ISE-impplan-200611.pdf>

⁷ GAO Report, The Federal Government Needs to Establish Policies and Processes For Sharing Terrorism-Related and Sensitive but Unclassified Information (released 3/06) <http://www.gao.gov/new.items/d06385.pdf>

consolidating the categories of “sensitive but un-classified” information would that counterterrorism and law enforcement agencies at all levels—including the front-line law enforcement and first responders—find the intelligence “products” they need.

Local and State authorities that have reached a certain level of expertise should be “horizontally” integrated into the ISE, so they can access and add information just like the 17 federal intelligence agencies are able. Cities like New York and Los Angeles that have recruited intelligence professionals and have independently operational intelligence gathering units should be given access to the full network of information to facilitate their own investigations. These large cities also represent the most likely locations for terrorist attacks and should have access to whatever intelligence they request, not just what has been “spoon-fed” to them by federal agencies.

Innovative ideas such as the “Intellipedia” information system will allow intelligence officials across agencies to share information and synthesize reports for policymakers. This “Wiki”-style system will ensure that dissenting views are shared prominently, preventing the kind of intelligence “group think” that affected the prewar estimates on Iraq.⁸ This effort and the use of open-source data mining is a commendable application of new technology to information sharing. Congress should support these efforts.

⁸ http://msl1.mit.edu/furdlog/docs/latimes/2006-11-01_latimes_intellipedia.pdf

Information sharing is not limited to top-down dissemination. A comprehensive plan must facilitate the development, analysis and dissemination of locally-collected intelligence up the ladder as well. Local and state law enforcement officials are the ground-level eyes and ears of the intelligence community. Clear channels and proper procedures should be established to ensure that intelligence flows into the information sharing “stream” and is directed to the appropriate federal agency for review.

The newly established 38 state/federal Intelligence Fusion Centers around the country will serve as important liaison offices to conduct information analysis and coordinate security measures. DHS should continue strongly supporting these Centers with grants and analysis training from Department experts. DHS has committed to having “tailored, multi-disciplinary teams of intelligence and operational professionals in major Fusion Centers nationwide by the end of fiscal year 2008.”⁹ It is important that Congress hold them to this goal and monitor the effectiveness of the Intelligence Fusion Centers from all perspectives—federal, state and local.

Finally, bureaucratic infighting in the office of the DNI-CIO has delayed a working technological system for sharing information. There is a valid debate over the merits of an HTML system versus a newer XML system. The office needs to show strong leadership,

⁹ http://www.dhs.gov/xinfo/share/programs/gc_1156877184684.shtm

select the programming the best technology, and implement it quickly.

RISK-BASED HOMELAND SECURITY APPROPRIATIONS

It's common knowledge that homeland security monies have been misspent over the several years. There has also been disparity in dedicating resources among the transportation industry. Following 9/11 securing the airline industry was set as a priority with 18 billion spent to date on aviation security, yet unscreened cargo is loaded onto passenger planes each day. I have particular concerns about the rail and transit systems, with less that \$500 million dedicated, our mass transit systems remain vulnerable, despite terrorist attacks in London and Madrid. A strategic plan must be implemented to address these vulnerabilities and resources must be devoted to protecting the large numbers of individuals using mass transit in the railway and transit industry. In particular, plans should be implemented to protect intramodal areas, particularly in the high density areas within metropolitan areas with dense populations.

We have learned that al Qaeda and Islamist extremists want to cause mass casualties and strike centers of national economic and political power. They are interested in destroying the nation's critical infrastructure – our nuclear, chemical, and power facilities, our transportation and telecommunications center, our food and water supplies. Thus, not all targets and locations are as likely to be attacked. We know, that high rise buildings in cities are a vulnerable targets and are hard to defend and difficult to evacuate. A pure

assessment of risk must guide our homeland security decision making.

CONGRESSIONAL REFORM and OVERSIGHT

The 9/11 Commission urged Congress to reform its own convoluted oversight practices and set up a simplified system to oversee Homeland Security. However, this effort has been derailed by familiar turf battles regarding authorization and appropriations. We urge this committee to take steps towards consolidating Homeland Security oversight into a single committee with broad authority. Since this committee is responsible in name for Homeland Security oversight, it should assume a leading role. The effort in the House to streamline intelligence oversight is encouraging, and the Senate should follow their lead. There are too many supervisors and not enough accountability in oversight of the Department of Homeland Security—especially in the appropriations process. If Congress is truly committed to effective oversight of homeland security, it must lead by example, take a hard look at itself, and make painful changes.

Congress should use existing resources such as the GAO, CRS and others to provide ongoing evaluations of not only the overall implementation of the 9/11 Commission Recommendations but also the job that Congress itself is doing. Reports must include benchmarks for success and timetables for accomplishing them, along with recommendations for ways to promote success and punish non-compliance. A mechanism should be established in Congress, by

ad-hoc committee or other means, to act on these reports and function as an internal “watchdog” on full implementation of the 9/11 Commission Recommendations.

CONCLUSION

In closing, the new Congress has an opportunity and responsibility to act with a sense of urgency and work cooperatively rather than competitively. The terrorist threat is evolving and as the threat evolves, so should we.

Let me summarize through the following:

- Americans in general do not feel safe from the threat of follow-on terrorist attacks
- Our government must increase the enablement of preparedness initiatives at the national, state and local levels – and make them seamless.
- Emergency worker communications through compatible technologies and processes is long overdue
- Information sharing needs to be the new normal in government – driven by a changed culture, changes expectations, inspected through revised management compensation systems.
- DHS must more prudently allocate monies and ensure funding is driving the expected results. Models based on risk and vulnerability must take precedence.

Over 5 years ago, my husband and I suffered the horrific loss of our wonderful young son Brad who along with 2,749 innocent citizens was senselessly murdered at the hand of terrorists living right here in the United States. Our lives were changed dramatically and the innocence of our children and our country was snatched away from us. On 9/11 we became part of a global community that lives with the threat of terrorism every day.

While I recognize the daunting task that lies ahead, I believe we must remain vigilant and steadfast in our commitment to ensure the government is doing everything within its power to make our country safer. Voices of September 11th welcomes the opportunity to work with your committee and other like-minded individuals, who feel as I do that no mother, father, wife, child or sibling should suffer the loss we have... and that innocent citizens should not die a horrific death at the hands of terrorists. I want to thank you, Senator Lieberman and Senator Collins and your colleagues for the opportunity to testify before this distinguished committee. Your unwavering dedication and commitment to the safety and security of our nation sets an example that will hopefully lead Congress to action in the new session.