

Testimony of  
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Before the  
Committee on Governmental Affairs  
United States Senate  
On  
"The Local Role in Homeland Security"

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9:30 a.m.

Good morning. I am Marc Morial, Mayor of New Orleans and President of The U.S. Conference of Mayors.

I want to thank Chairman Lieberman for calling today's hearing on the local role in homeland security, as well as Senator Thompson and the entire Committee.

Mayors have consistently attached a high priority to preparing ourselves, our personnel and our citizens for the possibility of disasters.

Now, in the wake of September 11 and the anthrax mailings, efforts to strengthen emergency management and anti-terrorism plans have been redoubled, and there have been significant additional deployments of police and other local public safety resources.

As I stated to Homeland Security Director Tom Ridge, "we are the domestic troops."

On October 23-25, the Conference of Mayors sponsored a Mayors Emergency, Safety and Security Summit in Washington, DC which brought together more than 200 mayors, police chiefs, fire chiefs, emergency managers and public health officials.

During the Summit, we presented initial policy recommendations to Director Ridge, Attorney General Ashcroft, FBI Director Mueller, HHS Secretary Thompson, FAA Administrator Garvey and other top officials. And we have since held a follow-up meeting with Director Ridge.

Today I am releasing the final report from our Summit, "A National Action Plan for Safety and Security in America's Cities," which I will briefly summarize.

### **EMERGENCY PREPAREDNESS**

The first area I would like to discuss is emergency preparedness.

#### **Office of Homeland Security**

First, mayors have long been concerned by the multiplicity of federal agencies which have responsibility for helping cities prepare for a possible attack, and for the incident consequences stages.

We are extremely encouraged by our initial conversations with Director Ridge who clearly understands the

importance of the intergovernmental partnership and need to better coordinate emergency preparedness.

To strengthen his efforts, we strongly believe that a cabinet-level Office of Homeland Security should be authorized by Congress and given budgetary authority over federal programs related to the domestic protection of our homeland.

I understand that Chairman Lieberman shares many of these concerns and has introduced legislation to create a Department of National Homeland Security.

### **Reimbursement for Heightened Security**

Second, of the approximately \$10 billion federal terrorism budget identified by the Office of Management and Budget, only 4.9 percent is allocated to state and local first response activities. And, of this limited amount, most is provided to the states.

Cities of all sizes have raised concerns about the need for equipment and training resources. Thousands of mid-sized and smaller communities have received no direct assistance in this area. For larger cities that have received some federal assistance, significant needs remain.

And as the front line defenders of homeland security and first responders to terrorist attacks and threats, America's cities have been incurring extraordinary costs as a result of the current state of heightened alert.

To ensure that heightened security can be maintained, we have called for a new flexible Homeland Security Block Grant to be used for overtime and other extra public safety deployment expenses, additional training, communications and rescue equipment, and security measures to protect airports, waterways, utilities, public transit and other public infrastructure.

I am extremely pleased that such legislation (S. 1737) was introduced by Senator Clinton, along with Senators Feinstein, Mikulski, Durbin and Schumer to authorize \$3 billion in the coming year for targeted block grant assistance to local governments, and I urge the Senate to pass this legislation.

However, I must point out that Congress took a major step backwards when it recently approved a \$122 million cut in the Local Law Enforcement Block Grant.

This 24 percent cut in one of the few existing programs that is provided directly to local governments and can be used for police overtime, comes at the very time when our police departments are facing extraordinary and unbudgeted costs as a result of moving to a heightened state of alert as requested by our federal government.

I want to strongly urge the members of this Committee to help us restore funding for this critically needed program.

### **Public Health System**

Third, it is generally acknowledged that the nation has failed to invest adequately in the local public health infrastructure. Resources are needed to: conduct active surveillance for disease; do immediate on-the-scene investigations; develop and test local bio-terrorism preparedness plans; allow for inter-agency communications; develop "surge capacity"; and maintain around-the-clock vigilance and readiness.

There must also be adequate regional stockpiles of vaccines and therapeutics located close enough to metropolitan centers to permit a quick response, and a rapid response testing network must be deployed.

## **TRANSPORTATION SECURITY**

The second area our Summit focused on was transportation security, with mayors being the owners and/or operators of many of the major transportation facilities and systems in the nation.

### **Airport Security**

First, our Task Force on Airport Security, chaired by Los Angeles Mayor James Hahn, drafted detailed recommendations on airport security and economic viability which are included in our National Action Plan.

Within 36 hours of the attacks, we called for federalization of security screening services, and we are extremely pleased that the final version of the aviation security bill contains this provision.

However, I cannot stress enough the importance of meeting the timetables established in the legislation, especially as they relate to baggage screening.

I know that Transportation Secretary Mineta has expressed concern regarding these timetables, which we discussed with him in a conference call on December 5. I want to strongly urge Congress to work closely with the Secretary to ensure that he has all the resources necessary to fully implement the legislation, and on time -- which I know is his strong desire.

And, I want to urge Congress to appropriate the funding authorized in the bill for reimbursement of local airport security costs related to 9-11.

### **Transit Security**

Second, with more than nine billion trips logged on the nation's public transit systems each year, securing these systems and protecting riders from potential terrorist activities ranks as a high priority. Public transit includes buses and vans, trains and light rail, and ferry boats.

To increase security while not compromising our ability to meet growing demand for public transit, we have called for new resources for security personnel; the deployment of new technologies; and infrastructure improvements including secure transit control facilities, fencing and barriers.

### **Passenger and Freight Rail Security**

Third, The U.S. Conference of Mayors strongly supports Amtrak's security and safety plan and urges that it be funded. I want to add that Congress must act to prevent the liquidation of Amtrak as currently proposed by the Amtrak Reform Council. Now, more than ever, we must strengthen our nation's passenger rail system, not dismantle it.

And on freight rail security, federal law should be examined and revised to require freight railroads to develop new notification procedures to help inform local jurisdictions through which they will be transporting chemicals or other hazardous materials, including storage on sidings and other practices that could increase risks to neighborhoods and major local assets and venues.

### **Port Security**

Fourth, mayors are greatly concerned that while much of the cargo delivered to U.S. cities each day by truck, train and air enters the country aboard container ships, a very small percentage of this cargo (some say as little as two percent) is inspected at its port of entry.

Protecting our international seaport borders should be the responsibility of a partnership of federal, state and local governments, seaports and private industry.

## **FEDERAL-LOCAL LAW ENFORCEMENT**

The final area I would like to cover this morning is federal-local law enforcement.

With over 650,000 local officers, our nation's local police forces must be integrated into our national homeland defense planning. As it stands, our public safety personnel are already being used to respond to the terrorism. But to be most effective, we must ensure that mayors and local law enforcement have access to the best intelligence available.

In the many meetings and discussions held on this subject since September 11, it became clear that barriers, both institutional and attitudinal, still exist at the federal level.

Our private and public discussions with FBI Director Mueller during our Summit were constructive. He said publicly that more must be done, and that the federal infrastructure used to share intelligence must be significantly modernized.

Attorney General Ashcroft has also initiated a number of important steps to strengthen federal-local cooperation through the Anti-Terrorism Task Forces.

Mayors believe that we must create a new communications system between federal and local public safety officials with a "24/7" threat assessment capability and appropriate sharing of intelligence. In addition, any institutional barriers to greater intelligence sharing between federal and local law enforcement agencies should be addressed.

On this point, I am pleased that Senators Schumer, Clinton, Leahy and Hatch have introduced the "Federal-Local Information Sharing Partnership Act" (S. 1615) which would allow the federal government to increase intelligence sharing with local and state governments. The U.S. Conference of Mayors strongly supports this important legislation.

## **Conclusion**

In addition to the issues I have discussed, many other important areas are covered in our National Action Plan including Border Security, Water and Wastewater Security, Communications Inter-Operability and Highway Safety.

I want to thank the Committee for this opportunity to testify, and I look forward to continued discussions as together we work to strengthen our nation's homeland defense.