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Remarks as Prepared by Secretary Napolitano to New York City First Responders

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"Rebuilding the Foundations for America's Hometown Security"

A New Framework for Security

Good morning. And thank you, Commissioner Bruno, for that introduction. It's always great to be back in New York City. And thank you NYPD Commissioner Ray Kelly; FDNY Commissioner Salvatore Cassano; FDNY Chief of Counterterrorism Joseph Pfeifer; FDNY Chief of Operations Robert Sweeney; and also NYC Transportation Commissioner Janette Sadik-Khan.

In addition to being born here, coming to New York at this time, on this date, and having the honor of speaking with first responders and law enforcement officials such as yourselves, has a special significance for me. And of course, this Office of Emergency Management, built after the old one was destroyed on 9/11, is a good example of the kind of resilience and determination that New Yorkers are known for.

This date and this place are also vivid reminders of why we have a Department of Homeland Security. Tomorrow, each of us in our own way will remember that day – the heroism of the first responders like you – and the thousands of lives lost when we were attacked.

I know that for some of you here this morning, these memories are all too real. You were among the policemen, firemen, and emergency personnel who ran toward the Towers as they were burning so that you could save others. Some of you stayed in the days and weeks ahead, working on the pile – memorializing those who were gone. All of you lost colleagues, friends, loved ones. Every American joins you in mourning those we lost – here in New York, at the Pentagon, and in Pennsylvania.

So tomorrow is also a reminder that each of us bears a unique sense of responsibility to one another, to our communities, to our states, and to our nation. Whether you are a police officer on the street, a firefighter, a doctor, a businessman, a student, or a stay-at-home parent, you – we – are the very backbone of our nation's homeland security. We are all interconnected in the effort to protect this country.

Right around this time last year, I gave a speech at the Council on Foreign Relations here in New York where I described a new framework for how we're approaching homeland security. It didn't involve a complex restructuring of DHS or big, flashy new programs. In fact, we streamlined operations, prioritized efficiency, and organized ourselves around our core missions.

Our starting point was the idea of interconnectedness and mutual responsibility. The question we kept asking was: "how can we do a smarter and better job of broadening the collective mission of protecting the homeland?" And our answer was this: we do it by seizing every opportunity to build a bigger and stronger security team and then equipping that team to succeed.

Therefore, over the past year and a half, I have made one of my very top priorities for DHS to get information, to get tools, and to get resources out of Washington, DC, and into the hands of the men and women serving on the front lines. That includes you – the first responders – but it also includes citizens, community groups, and our partners in the private sector.

This may not generate big headlines. But this hometown-centric approach has a big impact on our ability to be effective – and more important – to support you in the field.

The approach I outlined last year is bigger than just one Federal department, even a huge one like DHS. And putting into practice the notion that homeland security begins with hometown security, frankly, has implications for us all.

I said in that speech last year that we had an “urgent need to refocus our counter-terror approach to make it a shared endeavor to make it more layered, networked, and resilient – to make it smarter and more adaptive.” I said we needed to enlist a broader societal response to the evolving threats we’re facing – and that requires strengthening partnerships, and focusing on values like resilience and shared responsibility. And I said that individuals, families, communities, and businesses all have important roles to play.

This represents a shift for our country. In a sense, this harkens back to when we drew on the tradition of civil defense and preparedness that predated today’s concerns. In another way, however, it makes all of us responsible for being informed about the kinds of Twenty-First Century threats we face today.

Building a culture of preparedness and resilience across the country is a significant endeavor. And it is, indeed, still a work in progress. But I’m here today – a year later – to say that we have made progress. And we need to be making progress because the myriad threats against our nation have not gone away.

Indeed, they have grown even more dynamic. So, I want to share that progress with you, and let you know what I see coming down the road for us.

Supporting the Front-Lines: Law Enforcement, First Responders

As first responders, you are the critical link in our nation’s security and preparedness. You are often the first to identify a potential threat or recognize a larger trend that you’re seeing in your communities. In a way, you are “first preventers” as well as first responders. And we have a responsibility get you the kind of tools and training you want and need to do your job.

The old view that “if we fight the terrorists abroad, we won’t have to fight them here” is just that – the old view. It is abundantly clear that we have to fight them abroad, we have to fight them at home. We have to fight them, period. And you are as squarely in that fight as I am.

Accordingly, I felt that the Department needed to do more to support you, and also to do more to engage the private sector as partners in this effort. And, indeed, I felt we needed to do more to inform and empower citizens and communities to be the enormous assets they can be before, and during, a crisis or emergency.

Fusion Centers

We are doing exactly that, starting with strengthening the networks and relationships needed to get information where it should be, when it should be there, and in the most useful format. And we’re backing it up with historic deployments of personnel, technology, and resources.

At the heart of this are fusion centers. Starting with just one in 2006, there are now 72 fusion centers nationwide, serving as focal points for information-sharing among federal, state, local, tribal, and territorial partners.

By the end of this year, all 72 fusion centers should be able to analyze information and spot trends in order to effectively share timely intelligence – with local law enforcement, and with DHS, so the information can also be used by others within the Intelligence Community.

To support this vision: we’re prioritizing fusion centers in our FY2011 grants, and looking for ways to support them through additional technology and personnel, including the deployment of highly-trained experts in critical infrastructure; we’re deploying experienced DHS analysts to every one of these centers – 64 at last count – and we won’t stop until we have them in every one; and we’re linking them together, and with DHS headquarters, through the classified Homeland Security Data Network.

During the last two years, we’ve seen numerous threat streams, and we’ve also seen the increased role of Westerners, including U.S. citizens, engaged in terrorist training, planning, and attempted attacks. We’re seeing more – and more sophisticated – use of violent extremist messages by U.S.-born, English speakers who are operating abroad, and exploiting the Internet and social media tools. And in some of the domestic plots we’ve uncovered, such as the case of Najibullah Zazi, we’re seeing the kind of planning – like purchasing pre-cursor chemicals from beauty supply stores for making bombs – that rely on alert citizens and local authorities to detect.

Given this kind of threat environment, we believe strongly in the importance of strong

partnerships at the local level. Indeed, in the Zazi plot to bomb the New York Subway, it was a fusion center near Denver that played the key role in “fusing” information that came from the public with evidence that came in following the suspects’ arrest by the FBI.

Grants

There’s another important way we are pushing tools and resources out of Washington, D.C., and into local hands. Since 2003, DHS has awarded more than \$31 billion in grants, including \$3.8 billion for FY2010 for states, cities, law enforcement, and first responders.

This Administration is also directing almost \$3 billion in Recovery Act funds to critical security efforts, including major increases in explosive detection and checkpoint screening equipment, as well as grants to rebuild fire stations, port, and other security facilities, and creating good jobs along the way.

I know this is a difficult time for a lot of communities across America. We’re slowly emerging from the worst recession we’ve seen in decades. And our cities, states, and counties are dealing with some really tough budgets. As a former two-term Governor, I know what these hard choices look like. So to help ease that burden, we’re approaching grants in a whole new way, focusing on how states and locals can stretch these dollars further.

Over the past year, I eliminated red tape by streamlining the grant process and expanded what grants can be used for, such as maintenance and sustainability, which enables local jurisdictions to continue to support previous investments rather than buying new equipment or technology each year.

We’ve also supported fire departments across the country by making it easier to put these security dollars to work quickly, to rehire laid-off firefighters and to retain current forces. And we waived the local match requirement, the salary cap, and retention requirements to give fire departments – like the Fire Department of New York – more flexibility to protect the jobs of veteran firefighters.

Countering Violent Extremism

To counter violent extremism right here at home, I announced a series of initiatives last month to support state and local law enforcement and community groups across the country in identifying and reducing threats from violent crime and terrorism.

These include: a new community-oriented policing curriculum for state and local law enforcement, focused on enabling frontline personnel to identify indicators of terrorism and other threats; unclassified case studies examining recent incidents involving violent crime and terrorism to educate and inform state and local law enforcement personnel and about common behaviors and indicators exhibited by suspects; and intelligence products focused on the tactics, techniques and plans of international and domestic terrorist organizations to better inform state and local law enforcement personnel about threats facing the homeland and their local communities.

I recognize that no Cabinet Secretary or Federal department has a monopoly on good ideas. That’s why I based these efforts on recommendations from my Homeland Security Advisory Council, and its “Countering Violent Extremism” Working Group, comprised of chiefs of police, sheriffs, community leaders and homeland security experts.

Throughout this work, we are involving, and working closely with, religious, ethnic, and community organizations, including leaders from the Muslim, Arab, Sikh, and South Asian communities, many of whom have already been critical in thwarting violence. Members of these communities play enormously positive roles in enriching our national life. And like all Americans, they seek to protect and defend our nation, and our way of life.

Fielding a Bigger Team: Individuals, Communities, Private Sector

We’re taking other steps to support individuals and families, citizens and communities. Recall that it was a New York street vendor who tipped off a policeman about the bombing attempt in Times Square. It was a group of passengers on Flight 253 who intervened to stop the bombing attempt on Christmas Day.

Making individuals and citizens better informed and empowered is crucial, and DHS has therefore launched, and is expanding, a national campaign around a slogan you probably know well: “If You See Something, Say Something.” This campaign was first implemented by New York City’s Metropolitan Transit Authority, with support from DHS. The MTA has achieved some real success with the campaign, and they have been very generous in working

with us to bring it to a wide range of venues.

We're producing new signs, PSAs, videos, and other materials that you'll see in a number of different settings. We've expanded the campaign to additional transit systems, starting with Amtrak, and you can see posters in train stations across the country, and in trains along the Northeast Corridor. We've just launched the campaign in the National Capital Region. And I was recently in Nashville to announce its expansion to six southern states.

We're also working with professional and collegiate sports leagues, launching this effort at stadiums across the country this fall. As a matter of fact, we have "If You See Something, Say Something" posters and banners hanging at the U.S. Open. The goal of the "If You See Something, Say Something" campaign is making people more aware, but also providing them with the tools they need to take action if they see something suspicious.

Through this campaign, we're raising awareness of potential terrorist tactics, and emphasizing the importance of reporting suspicious activity to law enforcement. But that's just one side of the equation. We also see it as a partnership between citizens and local police.

To that end, we're also expanding the National Suspicious Activity Reporting, or SAR, initiative into a greater resource for front-line security personnel. The National SAR initiative creates a standard process for law enforcement in over two dozen states and cities to identify and report suspicious activity so it can be shared nationally to identify broader trends. We're working with our partners in the Department of Justice, which runs SAR, and widening it to include fusion centers, transit police, and other groups.

I should say that increasing awareness among the general public is not limited to countering terrorism. We're in the middle of National Preparedness Month, and, of course, it's also Hurricane season. Our FEMA colleagues are busy educating people about all kinds of natural disasters, as well as responding to floods, hurricanes, and other crises.

So, in addition to our security efforts, we're urging all Americans to visit Ready.gov – and the Spanish-language listo.gov – to take basic steps to prepare for any kind of a crisis. We're talking with Americans using the tools that they already use in their everyday lives. Across DHS, we're sharing information via blogs, Twitter feeds, and other social media tools.

In fact, FEMA has jumped to the fore by launching a highly-touted mobile site for smartphones and other hand-held devices. Through this mobile FEMA application, you can track the latest weather forecasts in your area, and if you live in an area prone to wildfires, hurricanes, floods, or other natural disasters, you can get information on how to prepare, and what to do in a crisis. You can even apply for assistance from FEMA right from your smartphone.

All of these tools are designed to get information into the hands of individuals so they can help build stronger, more resilient communities. On this last point, businesses big and small really can be a strong partner in our nation's security.

Here's one example: I just mentioned sports, and in addition to expanding the "If You See Something, Say Something" campaign to large public events, I've met with the commissioners and security directors for all the major sports leagues, and asked them to work with us to help make their arenas and stadiums more secure.

This is leading to some very promising joint efforts. For instance, DHS has a team with expertise on protection and resilience that, since May, has been visiting with owners and operators of all the big sports venues, and we're closing in on 300 sites.

Fostering Greater Resilience

We're also taking important steps to help our state and local partners strengthen the resilience of their infrastructure, computer networks, and of their communities and citizens – and strengthening the ability for our systems, our cities, our towns, and our country to bounce back quickly from an attack or a natural disaster, and to be even stronger than before.

We've been looking at a number of ways to create incentives to foster this kind of resilience. In the coming days, we'll be releasing details of a new national award that will recognize people, organizations, or communities who have exhibited an extraordinary commitment to resilience.

We have produced what we call a Community Resilience Registry where communities can input information on roughly a hundred different data points to develop a "resilience profile" of their community.

We're also prioritizing resilience in some of our key FY2011 grant programs, including inserting language into our grant guidance to encourage applicants to consider strategies for increasing resilience at the local level.

Conclusion: Strength

America is a strong nation. And we are a resilient nation. But that doesn't mean that we don't have to examine and recommit to the sources of that strength and resilience from time to time.

As I've said before, we can't guarantee there won't be another successful terrorist attack. The threats we face are evolving, and enemies like al Qaeda and its affiliates are determined. We can't seal our country under a glass dome.

But if that attack comes, our enemies will still not have succeeded, because our nation is too strong, and too resilient, to ever cower before a small group of violent extremists. We have always rebounded from hardships and challenges, and come together as a people to overcome disasters, attacks, and war. And we will do so again.

Today, on the eve of the ninth anniversary of the worst terrorist attack in our nation's history, I can pledge to you this: we will do everything in our power to prevent attacks, and to prepare ourselves. At DHS, a fundamental part of that obligation is to get information, tools, and resources into the hands of people who can use them to help all of us be more secure.

To field that bigger team – to enlist individuals, local communities, businesses, law enforcement and first responders in a network of shared responsibility – to enlist the nation in its own collective security. It's the American way: because we all face the threats of today's world, as well as the opportunities it brings, we're all in this together.

With your help, DHS will keep supporting those of you on the front lines, and keep strengthening the networks that will keep us secure. We'll all build, and be part, of a bigger, smarter, stronger team. And that's how we'll keep America safe.

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