Remarks by Secretary of Homeland Security Tom Ridge at a Press Conference Announcing a Homeland Security Grant to Los Angeles

Release Date: 12/15/04 00:00:00

Los Angeles, CA
Press Conference
December 15, 2004
(Remarks as Prepared)

Good afternoon, it is great to be here at Fire Station 27 with the people who are on the front lines protecting this city and our nation. The L.A. Fire Department Museum and Fallen Firefighter Memorial next door vividly remind us of the sacrifices our first responders make every day to keep our communities safe.

Many thanks to all of you for the great job you and your teams have done. You all work extremely hard to protect our nation every day. You are committed to protecting every citizen from the threat of terrorism, and I have been fortunate to work with you during the past three years. Thank you also for your dedication and partnership. We are not yet safe, but we are safer. And with your continued commitment, we will prevail and preserve our freedom from those terrorists who seek to destroy it.

But simply being committed to that task is not enough to make us safe. We cannot achieve our collective mission without giving you the tools that help you do your jobs. Our job at the Department of Homeland Security is to get you the resources, the funds, the technology, the technical assistance and the training you need as quickly as we can in order for you to fight terrorism.

So we are pleased to announce that California has been awarded more than $282 million in new fiscal year 2005 Homeland Security Grant Program and Urban Areas Security Initiative funding. Right here in the Los Angeles urban area, you have been awarded $65 million.

These grants are part of the more than $2.5 billion in 2005 grants awarded to states and urban areas that we announced this month – funds that will provide local communities and first responders with the resources they need to prevent, respond to and recover from acts of terrorism and other disasters.

California has now received more than $1 billion in homeland security funds since 2002. And you have used those funds well. The equipment here in back of us -- hazmat rigs, bomb detection equipment, personal protective equipment – in addition to emergency management software to enable real-time information exchange and air sampling equipment and chemical detectors…are examples of that. These are tools that fire fighters and emergency personnel need to fight terrorism.

And your work to create four Regional Terrorism Threat Assessment Centers to work in partnership with the FBI, the Joint Terrorism Task Force, the Department of Justice, the California State Highway Patrol and Emergency Services shows that you understand our philosophy of shared responsibility, shared accountability and shared leadership. You understand that the key to terrorism prevention is mutual cooperation -- sharing resources such as intelligence, equipment, supplies, training…and people. Your efforts and example show the nation a level of cooperation, coordination and communication that reflects the urgency of our challenge to prevent a terrorist attack and respond to any emergency.

How do we do this? By sharing information and best practices, developing standards and plans, and coming together for a common purpose. Thank you all for helping to lead that effort. And thank you all for your ideas, energy and cooperation.

With input from all of you – and state and local partners across the country – these new grants will get the tools to fight terror more quickly to those who need them most – first responders on the front lines.

Working together, we have continually improved the grant process. We have streamlined funding procedures, expedited the flow of funds and established greater accountability measures. All of these initiatives will enhance the capabilities of our nation’s first responders to prevent terrorism and respond to emergencies.

In the end, it is our collective commitment as a country to confront terrorism that will mean the ultimate difference in this war on terrorism.

These grants are an important part of our common mission to preserve our freedoms, and protect America. And we will fulfill our mission. We will meet this urgent challenge. And, together, we will win this war.
Thank you.