

STATEMENT OF

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BEFORE THE

SUBCOMMITTEE ON TERRORISM AND HOMELAND SECURITY

COMMITTEE ON THE JUDICIARY

UNITED STATES SENATE

“Government Preparedness and Response to a Terrorist Attack Using Weapons of  
Mass Destruction”

WEDNESDAY, AUGUST 4, 2010

## **INTRODUCTION**

Chairman Cardin, Ranking Member Kyl and distinguished members of the Subcommittee, I am Steward Beckham, Director of the Office of National Capital Region Coordination (NCRC), located in the Department of Homeland Security's (DHS) Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA). Thank you for inviting me to appear before you today to discuss preparedness in the National Capital Region (NCR).

## **THE NATIONAL CAPITAL REGION AND THE ROLE OF NCRC**

The NCR is the fourth largest metropolitan area in the United States, encompassing the District of Columbia and parts of Maryland and Virginia. It comprises twelve local jurisdictions, including the cities of Alexandria, Fairfax, Falls Church, Manassas and Manassas Park, as well as the counties of Arlington, Fairfax, Loudoun, and Prince William in Virginia, and Montgomery and Prince George's in Maryland. These include the municipalities of Bowie, College Park, Gaithersburg, Greenbelt, Rockville and Takoma Park.

Congress created NCRC pursuant to section 882 of the Homeland Security Act of 2002, in order to "oversee and coordinate federal programs for and relationships with state, local, and regional authorities" within the NCR. Congress further directed NCRC to coordinate with federal, state and local officials and the private sector to enhance domestic preparedness and also to provide information and technical support to its state and local partners against the consequences of terrorist attacks.

To fulfill its mission, NCRC has built and continues to foster strong partnerships and collaboration with state, local and regional authorities in the NCR. NCRC interacts daily with public, private and non-profit homeland security officials. As an example, the Director of NCRC represents DHS and FEMA on the NCR Senior Policy Group (SPG), comprised of the homeland security advisors and chief emergency managers of Virginia, Maryland and the District of Columbia. The SPG plays a key role in sustaining a coordinated regional approach to homeland security and in strengthening integrated decision making and planning in the NCR.

The SPG is just one example of effective NCRC partnership to enhance preparedness in the NCR. In addition, NCRC actively engages with chief administrative officers (e.g. city and county managers), public health officials, first responders, emergency managers, leaders from the private sector and non-profit communities, and many other federal, state and local partners in support of all hazards preparedness.

## **SELECTED NCR PREPAREDNESS ACTIVITIES**

On behalf of DHS and FEMA, NCRC provides technical support and advises state, local and regional partners in continuously updating their own planning efforts and integrating federal planning efforts. To ensure adequate and coordinated all-hazards and catastrophic planning, the NCR has invested in regional planners who work on a series of plans, including some that are relevant to a weapon of mass destruction (WMD) event in the NCR, such as the Regional Emergency Coordination Plan, Special Medical Needs Sheltering Plan, Mutual Aid Operations Plan, NCR Mass Casualty Plan, Large Scale Critical Infrastructure Decontamination Plan,

Regional Resource Management Plan, and Alternate Care Facilities. Further, NCRC has partnered with the Office of Personnel Management (OPM) to draft an NCR Federal Concept Plan (CONPLAN) of Catastrophic Planning Assumptions in FY 2011 – it will address the critical planning assumptions and anticipated coordinating instructions that federal departments and agencies will implement within the NCR during a catastrophic event. The CONPLAN will facilitate increased collaboration and integration of federal planning efforts with those of state, local and regional partners. FEMA’s National Continuity Programs Directorate (NCP), a sister office to the NCRC, is the lead agent for continuity planning for the federal executive branch, ensuring continuity of national essential functions under all hazards. NCP also provides continuity planning materials, training, and assistance to the NCR, as well as alert and warning information to the American public. In the NCR, NCP also works closely with state and local personnel to formulate plans and approaches for use in the event of emergency situations. Exercises of these plans occur regularly with regional partners, in coordination with NCRC staff.

Homeland security partners across the NCR also pursue coordinated communications and information sharing, equipment purchases, and innovative training and exercises. This close alignment strengthens the region’s emergency prevention and response capabilities to address all hazards, including WMD. For example, jurisdictions in the NCR have invested Urban Area Security Initiative (UASI) grant dollars in regional planners that have worked on a series of coordinated plans to address communications, information sharing, mass care, sheltering, critical infrastructure needs, and regional resource management, among others. Other examples of the NCR’s commitment to concerted action include:

- Regional Interoperability: We are currently working on two infrastructure projects, the Interconnected Government Networks and the Data Exchange Hub. These two projects represent technology advancements that provide responders with the data they need, anytime and anywhere.
- Metrorail Tunnel Response Operations: This program will provide emergency equipment caches at each underground Metro station and design the prototype for a tunnel rescue cart.
- The NCR Syndromic Surveillance Network (ESSENCE) is a disease surveillance system that captures health department data to provide early detection capability. The system has been fully operational since 2004.
- The NCR has installed an information sharing system called LinX. This system links local, state, and federal law enforcement databases. Currently there are 25 NCR agencies participating. The NCR partnered with Baltimore and the Hampton Roads area to expand LinX and joined the three urban areas together in March of this year.

FEMA and the Department of Homeland Security have provided over \$600 million to NCR partners since the inception of the Department, through the Urban Areas Security Initiative, State Homeland Security, Transit Security, Regional Catastrophic Planning, Port Security and other Grant Programs. These programs support planning, training, equipment purchases and exercises for WMD and all hazards preparedness. Additionally, federal partners such as the Department of Health and Human Services have contributed through their grant mechanisms to support many of these activities. This is in addition to significant preparedness efforts funded by the individual jurisdictions in the NCR.

Additionally, NCRC and other SPG members have developed the NCR “First Hour Checklist” to guide coordinated actions during the initial response to an incident in the NCR. NCRC coordinates efforts to maintain interoperability and provides information and guidance on all-hazards risk to support stakeholders in making risk-informed decisions. .

With NCR partners, NCRC plans or participates in exercises, drills and events (e.g., Presidential Inaugurations, National Security Special Events, state funerals, and large demonstrations) that occur with frequency in the NCR, to bolster information sharing and integrated planning. The region’s training and exercise programs are administered and coordinated by the NCR Exercise and Training Operations Panel (ETOP). The ETOP is comprised of representatives from NCR federal, state and local entities. This group’s frequent planning and cooperation serves to integrate and strengthen all-hazards preparedness, whether for natural, man-made or terrorist-related incidents. Such coordination will be essential in the event of a terrorist attack affecting the NCR using a WMD.

## **CONCLUSION**

NCRC’S established working relationships support broader FEMA efforts to maintain and enhance its relationships with state and local partners. During a response to an incident within the NCR, the NCRC would support FEMA Region III and the Federal Coordinating Officer by providing situational awareness and participating in the Unified Coordination Group. If needed, it would send agency representatives to operations/communications centers to facilitate information sharing. In the event of an incident in the NCR, NCRC stands ready to support FEMA’s core mission and our federal, state and local NCR partners.

Building on decades of regional collaboration, federal, state, local and regional partners remain committed to a common vision of working together toward a safe and secure National Capital Region. We work every day to build and sustain an integrated effort to prepare for, prevent, protect against, respond to, recover from, and mitigate all hazards, including WMD terrorism.

Should an incident occur in the National Capital Region, FEMA has established a course of action to mobilize and coordinate a well-organized response and recovery.

Thank you for allowing me the opportunity to testify. I am happy to answer any questions the Subcommittee may have.