

# NEEDS OF AMERICA'S FIREFIGHTERS

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HEARING  
BEFORE A  
SUBCOMMITTEE OF THE  
COMMITTEE ON APPROPRIATIONS  
UNITED STATES SENATE  
ONE HUNDRED SEVENTH CONGRESS  
SECOND SESSION

**SPECIAL HEARING**  
FEBRUARY 5, 2002—WASHINGTON, DC

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## NEEDS OF AMERICA'S FIREFIGHTERS

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TUESDAY, FEBRUARY 5, 2002

U.S. SENATE,  
SUBCOMMITTEE ON VA, HUD, AND  
INDEPENDENT AGENCIES,  
COMMITTEE ON APPROPRIATIONS,  
*Washington, DC.*

The subcommittee met at 10:50 a.m., in room SD-124, Dirksen Senate Office Building, Hon. Barbara A. Mikulski (chairman) presiding.

Present: Senators Mikulski, Bond, and Craig.

### NONDEPARTMENTAL WITNESSES

#### OPENING STATEMENT OF SENATOR BARBARA A. MIKULSKI

Senator MIKULSKI. The Subcommittee on VA-HUD will now come to order.

Today is a very special hearing because it will focus on the need of America's fire departments and firefighters. What we want to be able to do today is to find out how we can protect our communities and how we can protect our first responders.

Since September 11, all eyes have focused on the heroic efforts of America's firefighters, whether it was in New York or at the Pentagon. I know, though, that every day there are firefighters out there putting themselves truly, literally in the line of fire. We want to be able to thank you not with words but with deeds, to really hear from those who are the leadership of America's firefighters, as well as the firefighters themselves, about how we can meet the compelling needs of homeland security.

We are now asking America's fire departments, whose primary focus has been the protection of local communities, the prevention of fires, rescue, search and rescue, to be part of America's significant effort on homeland security, to be able to be all-hazards agencies to really protect us against fires, against chemical attacks, to be ready for biological attacks, and to be prepared to deal with weapons of mass destruction.

We know that you cannot do this on either a local property tax or, for our volunteer firefighters, you cannot do this on fish fries, bingo, and tip jars. We are already asking you to put yourself in the line of fire. You do it often on your own time, and on your own dime. For the big urban communities, we know that their firefighters are often the last in municipal budget efforts. We hope to be able to support firefighters the way we, over a decade ago, sup-

ported our police departments. You are our public safety officers, and we are going to make sure we help you out.

I think America does not realize that there are over 1 million firefighters in the United States of America. Seven hundred fifty thousand are volunteers. There are already 155,000 nationally registered emergency medical technicians. Actually firefighters and emergency medical personnel responded to over 16 million emergency calls last year. And every year, more than 100 firefighters lose their lives in the line of duty.

That is, up until September 11, when a grim and ghoulish thing happened where there was an aerial attack on the United States of America. And we saw it at the World Trade Center and we saw it at the Pentagon. That day in New York City at Ground Zero, where both my colleague and I have been, 343 New York City firefighters lost their lives in the World Trade Center trying to save others.

Why were they there? Because of the first World Trade Center bombing, they were ready to be there first, as quickly as they could, should there be anything happening to the trade center. Well, you and I know that no one expected the collapse of two buildings.

As I said, this Nation cannot merely express its gratitude with words alone. We want to express our gratitude to those who risk their lives every day.

We have been thinking about this for some time, our colleagues in the House, our colleagues in the Senate. We know that there is a firefighter caucus, of which I have been a member. We created a Fire Grant program through FEMA. It was authorized at \$300 million, which we saw as essentially a down payment to meet local needs, not to substitute for volunteerism, not to be a substitute for property taxes, but to be value added for meeting national needs.

The first year we provided \$100 million. That was for the fiscal year 2001 appropriations. Last year we were able to come up with an additional \$290 million in an emergency supplemental.

But the needs are so tremendous, and I will tell you our President, President Bush, and Governor Tom Ridge, our Homeland Security Director, have taken note of this. Therefore, the President is proposing a significant increase of a \$3.5 billion grant program for America's first responders. And, do we need it.

Even before September 11, in evaluating the Fire Grant program, we saw that FEMA had gotten over 30,000 requests for assistance under the Fire Grant program. Remember, this is by September 8. That totals \$3 billion. In my own State of Maryland, 200 separate fire companies sent in requests totalling \$40 million. These requests were for firefighting vehicles, firefighting equipment, and that very crucial personal protective gear.

You all are going to tell me about the cost of a fire truck. I think it is \$300,000. New rescue vehicles, \$500,000. Protective gear, well over \$1,000. And now, hopefully, we will now even have unmanned robots that will go in as preliminaries to you. Communication equipment. All of this shows the need, and we want to hear what you think.

I want to pay attention to what President George Bush wants in homeland security and how we can support you, but I want to pay

attention to those of you who respond when either a citizen or a President calls up 9-1-1. And 9/11 will be forever in our hearts.

So, today we are turning to our firefighters. We are going to listen to them.

Now I would like to turn to my colleague, Senator Bond, for his comments, and then we are going to hear from our first panel.

STATEMENT OF SENATOR CHRISTOPHER S. BOND

Senator BOND. Thank you very much, Madam Chair, for calling this important and timely hearing. I think we could spend all day talking about the heroism, the needs, and what we have learned. I am going to summarize my formal statement and then give you a little insight I gathered yesterday.

But I think it is clear, as the chair has recognized, that the President's budget recognizes and responds to the harsh realities of September 11 and what we need to do particularly in this area.

Out of the rubble of this tragedy, Americans who stood tall with our firefighters, our police, military, and first responders of all kinds, under these horrific circumstances, we came together as Americans to respond to the cowardly terrorist attacks. And the budget that the President submitted and we are supporting is proof to the world that we are not going to bow down to the threats of terrorists.

This hearing should allow us to understand better the overall funding needs of fire departments to meet the traditional firefighting activities. These needs are very different, depending on whether the department is volunteer or a paid career department. Many of them are still severely lacking in funds, equipment, and training to meet traditional local firefighting emergencies. And as the chair has indicated, the need was already there before September 11.

But we will also hear testimony on how the mission and needs of firefighters have changed since September 11 and the expanded role as first responders to threats and acts of terrorism. And they can be not only a horrifying attack on a world trade center with an airplane, but they can be biological, chemical, or even radioactive. The new understanding of these threats has made this significant increase in resources necessary.

It is going to be a real source of pride and pleasure to introduce my good friend, Steve Paulsell, Chief of the Boone County Fire Protection District, and Sponsoring Agency Chief for Missouri Task Force 1. He does a remarkable job in my neighboring Boone County, Missouri, administering the fire protection district, and as head of Task Force 1, his personnel made a tremendous difference in helping victims, as well as assisting to minimize the aftermath of this tragedy. I have to say that the people of Missouri felt a very real connection with the horror of New York because we had dedicated volunteers who were willing to go to help. And Steve can give us a perspective on both the funding needs of volunteer firefighters, as well as the expectations on first responders, to acts of terrorism.

This issue is extremely important to me. There are 865 rural fire departments in Missouri, meeting the needs of their communities on shoestring budgets, guts, and personal commitment.

Steve, I say also, has a special understanding as the Sponsoring Agency Chief of 1 of only 28 urban search and rescue task forces. They are underfunded, underequipped, but they are dedicated and committed first-line soldiers responding to the worst acts of terrorism.

The current capacity of first responders varies widely across the United States. Even the best prepared States are lacking crucial resources and expertise. And many areas have little or no ability to cope or respond to a terrorist attack, especially with the new weapons of mass destruction. We need a comprehensive approach and we need to back it up with resources. Recent revelations that show Osama bin Laden and Al Qaeda were looking for vulnerabilities in our dams, water systems, and nuclear plants provide a new level of concern and responsibility. In these circumstances, we have to identify and support these needs.

But yesterday, as I indicated to my good friend, Senator Mikulski, I visited Ground Zero just to see the progress. It is unbelievable. You are looking at it from 30 floors up, and you see that they have moved 14 to 15 stories of rubble out of the way. There are still some areas where we may find remains of the victims, but the place is beginning to look like a normal construction site. You say, oh, well, that is very nice.

But then you go down to the ground and you see the family platforms, the places where people have posted a message. I thought I was tough. I was wrong. I could not handle it. But also you see so many good messages. The people who have responded from around the country, the volunteers who are still working there helping the people engaged in the work and the cleanup, to know that the Salvation Army and the Red Cross were there, churches were there, school children from all over the Nation have sent letters, have sent messages, have sent gifts.

#### PREPARED STATEMENT

I talked to Reverend Harris at St. Paul's Church, and he told me so many stories of people volunteering and the volunteers were still working there. And he told me of the elderly, very poor lady who lived in the upper Bronx who had heard that people had hurt their legs. She took the subway all the way down, got through the police lines by dint of sheer effort, hobbled up to St. Paul's Church, and handed Reverend Harris her cane and said that she wanted to make a contribution. That is the spirit in which Americans have responded.

So, with that, thank you very much, Madam Chair. We are looking forward to hearing our witnesses.

[The statement follows:]

#### PREPARED STATEMENT OF SENATOR CHRISTOPHER S. BOND

Thank you, Madam Chair, for calling this important and timely hearing. The President submitted his Budget for fiscal year 2003 yesterday and one of its cornerstones acknowledges the important role and funding needs of firefighters in our communities by recommending an unprecedented increase of some \$3.5 billion in FEMA's budget for the homeland security response capabilities of America's First Responders, which includes firefighters, police and emergency medical technicians. This Budget request recognizes the harsh realities of September 11 and the need to be ever vigilant to protect the freedom and moral principles that have guided this



Nation for over 200 years and which have been a beacon of hope for the oppressed peoples of totalitarian regimes throughout the world.

Out of the rubble of this tragedy, Americans have stood tall with our firefighters, police and military leading the way. Under these horrific circumstances, we banded together as Americans to assist the victims of these cowardly, terrorist attacks and this Budget request is further proof to the world that we will not bow down to the oppression and hate that is the ideology of terrorism.

So while this hearing is largely designed to review the FIRE Act grant program which was initially funded by this subcommittee in fiscal year 2001, it also provides an important opportunity to hear first hand from the firefighting community about the funding needs and issues that face firefighters in their enhanced role as First Responders to acts of terrorism.

This hearing also allows us better to understand the overall funding needs of fire departments to meet the traditional firefighting activities of their communities. These needs are very different, depending on whether the department is a volunteer department or a paid, career department. In particular, many or most volunteer fire departments are severely lacking in funds, equipment and training to meet traditional local firefighting emergencies. We need to understand better these needs and how the FIRE Act grant program can be improved to ensure these fire departments have the necessary equipment and training.

The need clearly is there. In fiscal year 2001, FEMA received over 19,000 applications for available grant funds of \$100 million. These applications constituted some 31,000 requests for assistance for a total of \$2.9 billion. For fiscal year 2002, we appropriated some \$360 million for the FIRE Act grant program while the act expanded the eligible uses of these funds to include training and equipment to respond to terrorism or the use of a weapon of mass destruction.

In addition, we will hear testimony on how the mission and needs of firefighters have changed since September 11 with the recognition that firefighters, police and emergency medical technicians will have an expanded role as First Responders to threats and acts of terrorism, be they biological, chemical or the result of the use of a weapon of mass destruction. The huge increase in funding for the FIRE Act grant program is largely the result of a new understanding and recognition of the important role that we expect firefighters to play in response to acts of terrorism.

In particular, I am proud to introduce a witness from Missouri, a good personal friend, Steve Paulsell, who is the Chief of the Boone County Fire Protection District and Sponsoring Agency Chief for Missouri Task Force 1. Steve does a remarkable job in administering the Boone County Fire Protection District, which is a volunteer fire department and one of the largest in the Nation. In addition, as head of the Missouri Task Force 1, his personnel made a tremendous difference in helping the victims of the horrific tragedy at the World Trade Center as well as assisting to minimize the aftermath of this tragedy. With these dual responsibilities, Steve has a unique perspective on both the funding needs of volunteer firefighters in meeting the traditional responsibilities of local fire departments as well as the new expectations for First Responders to acts of terrorism. This is an extremely important issue to me since there are 865 rural fire departments in Missouri which are volunteer departments meeting the needs of their communities on shoestring budgets, guts and personal commitment.

In addition, as the Sponsoring Agency Chief of one of only 28 urban search and rescue task forces in the United States, Steve has a special understanding of what will be needed to establish a comprehensive, national First Responder program. These task forces are currently underfunded and underequipped, but, nonetheless, are committed to be the front-line soldiers of our local governments to respond to the worst aspects of terrorism at the community level. I believe our first obligation is to realize fully the capacity of these 28 search and rescue task forces to meet First Responder events.

As noted, the President has requested an increase of some \$3.5 billion in the fiscal year 2003 budget for FEMA in order to provide police, firefighters and emergency medical technical teams with the needed training, staffing and equipment to work effectively and quickly to meet the threat and consequences of a terrorist attack. Despite the response to September 11, the current capacity of communities and First Responders vary widely across the United States, with even the best prepared States lacking crucial resources and expertise. Many areas have little or no ability to cope or respond to a terrorist attack, especially ones that use weapons of mass destruction, including biological or chemical toxins.

The recommended commitment of funding in the President's Budget is only the first step. There needs to be a comprehensive approach that identifies and meets State and local First Responder needs, both rural and urban, pursuant to Federal leadership, benchmarks and guidelines. As a result, the roles of the Office of Home-

land Security and FEMA need to be clearly articulated, especially if the Administration expects the Congress to bless a transition of responsibility for the police as First Responders from the Department of Justice to FEMA. We also need to address the fears of local fire departments, especially rural departments, that some fire departments will be shortchanged if these First Responder funds are block granted to States subject to a State plan.

In addition to these issues, there are recent revelations that Osama bin Laden and al Qaeda were looking for vulnerabilities in our dams, water systems and nuclear plants. These revelations reemphasize the size of the job facing our Nation in providing the needed security expected by our citizens and the immediacy of the problem. Finally, there needs to be coordination and cooperation through the Office of Homeland Security with the Department of Defense, the National Guard, FEMA, the Department of Justice and our other domestic agencies to make this work. In any event, there is much to discuss and debate.

Thank you, Madam Chair. I look forward to the testimony today and I applaud the early start on this important issue.

Senator MIKULSKI. Thank you, Senator Bond.

I would like to call up now Assistant Chief Morris, and Chief Paulsell that Senator Bond has already spoken about, and Firefighter Olaguer to present their testimony. Gentlemen, America welcomes you, and I want you to know that as we sit here today listening to your testimony, we are neither the Republican Party nor the Democratic Party. We are the Red, White, and Blue Party. So, we are here to work on a bipartisan basis to be able to support you.

Chief Paulsell, Senator Bond has already told us about your wonderful and extensive career.

Assistant Chief Morris, we want to welcome you. For the record, please show that Assistant Chief Morris is in the volunteer ranks of the Bethesda-Chevy Chase Rescue Squad. He joined it in 1984. When he is not saving lives, he is a CNN cameraman covering the White House. And that tells you something really about the broad spectrum of who our volunteer fighters are. It was the Bethesda-Chevy Chase Rescue Squad that responded to the Pentagon. When I went over there that day, I saw this wonderful rescue squad that literally was moving heaven and earth to continue the search and rescue. We look forward to hearing that, but we saw you there in that horrific undertaking.

Of course, we have Mr. Olaguer from the Baltimore City Fire Department who comes again with an extensive background. He has been a firefighter. He has been working as a lieutenant, a platform operator, and a pump operator.

Senator Bond, you should know that Baltimore faced its own crisis in August when a cargo train was trapped in one of the oldest train tunnels in America. We did not know what was in there. We did not know if it was going to explode. We did not know if it was going to be a toxic cloud that was going to explode over Baltimore. It was a tunnel of several miles.

And Mr. Olaguer went down into that tunnel and it shows you what our firefighters do. They had to go down through a manhole cover. They had to go down 8 feet in dark and smoke to a platform to then go down another ladder, and we did not know if they were descending into hell, toxic fumes, or what they were going to find as they did it. And they went fearlessly. They were intrepid. And thanks to their effort and the cooperation with civil engineering skills, we were able to get out of that. But just know there was a time in Baltimore when manhole covers were exploding and we had

300-pound manhole covers going through the air as frisbees, and these men, going down there, did not know what they would find and we did not know if they could come back out. So, God bless you for all of that.

Having said all that, why do we not start with you, Mr. Morris, and then just go down the line, ending with you, Mr. Olaguer.

**STATEMENT OF PETER MORRIS, ASSISTANT CHIEF, BETHESDA-CHEVY CHASE RESCUE SQUAD**

Mr. MORRIS. Good morning, Madam Chairwoman and members of the committee. I am Assistant Chief Peter Morris of the Bethesda-Chevy Chase Rescue Squad.

I would like to take the opportunity to commend you, Senator Mikulski, and the other members of the subcommittee for providing the important leadership needed on this critical issue. Senator Mikulski recently visited our station, and the firefighter/rescuers in our department were very impressed with her interest and her in-depth knowledge of the fire/rescue services. We would not be able to do our jobs without the support of our elected leaders. We consider the members of this subcommittee to be a vital part of our team. Senator Mikulski, the extra time that you spent at our station sent a strong message to our firefighters that you and your colleagues are committed to finding political solutions that help our service and ultimately our community. So, we thank you very much for that.

Bethesda-Chevy Chase Rescue Squad is located in Montgomery County, Maryland. Our department provides 24-hour fire, rescue, and emergency medical service to a suburban/urban area of southern Montgomery County and portions of northwest Washington, D.C. The rescue squad is unusual in that it provides fire and emergency medical service without the benefit of tax funds from Montgomery County or the District of Columbia. We are a vibrant, successful volunteer organization that defies the myth that volunteer fire and rescue departments can only exist in rural, low-call volume systems. In 2001, Bethesda-Chevy Chase Rescue Squad units responded to 10,957 emergency incidents.

Today I have been asked to provide a local responder's view of the terrorism and disaster preparedness world. Our response area is replete with foreign embassies, residences of senior Government officials and other dignitaries, the National Institutes of Health, the National Naval Medical Center, four Metro stations, and a number of other high-profile Government facilities and potential targets for a terrorist attack.

Over the years, we have responded to major incidents in neighboring jurisdictions, including the District of Columbia. We share a close daily working relationship with the District of Columbia Fire and Emergency Medical Services Department, which means that we are one of the first outside resources that are called upon to assist the District in a response to a major disaster.

On September 11, 2001, our units were first called to assist the District but were sent to the Pentagon once it became clear that no targets had been struck in the city. Four of our medic units, a special air supply truck, and a command officer were on scene at the Pentagon and back-filling Arlington County fire stations within

the first hour of the attack. Our air supply unit supported fire-fighting operations at the Pentagon for the first 24 hours. That same unit was parked outside of this building for more than a week supporting the cleanup operations at the Hart Building.

Our experience responding to major incidents over the past several decades and our recent experience responding to the September 11 attack on the Pentagon has taught us four major lessons.

First of all, these incidents reaffirm the critical role of local fire, rescue, EMS, police departments. And local governments, including their fire, rescue, EMS, law enforcement and public health departments, are the Nation's primary defense when a terrorist attack occurs. Local fire and rescue services are the only agencies that can respond within minutes and save lives while there is still time. They must be equipped to provide the initial response, immediate rescue and treatment, and scene stabilization.

Second, the development of Federal assets such as various FEMA units, including urban search and rescue teams, the metropolitan medical response system, and civil support teams are good, but they cannot solve the terrorism problem alone. With the exception of designated national security events like the Olympics or the Superbowl where Federal assets are likely to be prestaged and ready to respond, the response times of Federal assets may be extended. Local responders must be equipped and prepared to deal with at least the first several hours, if not the first 24 hours of a terrorist attack.

Third, special efforts and attention need to be devoted to high threat areas. We know that terrorists are more likely to select symbolic targets, including high profile Government facilities, and we believe special efforts should be devoted to ensuring that departments in and around high-threat targets have the information and resources they need to respond effectively. Many of these targets are Federal facilities or where Federal Government has public safety responsibilities, such as foreign embassies.

Lastly, our department stresses the application of the daily routine doctrine to our domestic preparedness plans and our overall operations. The daily routine doctrine is a common sense theory in emergency planning that espouses the idea that what you do regularly you do well. It argues that training and techniques and equipment required to mitigate large emergencies must be part of daily fire, rescue, and emergency medical services, if these incidents are to be managed effectively. If we integrate terrorism preparedness into everyday training and equipment needs, we are most likely to succeed when the next terrorist attack occurs.

Now, one program that is already in existence that is helping to meet the mandate of the daily routine doctrine is the Assistance to Firefighters grant program. This program is using Federal dollars to bolster the Nation's fire and rescue systems.

The good news about the Assistance to Firefighters grant program is that it gave out almost \$100 million to improve basic fire and rescue infrastructure in the fiscal year 2001. These improvements will help all types of emergency response whether to a terrorist bombing, an auto collision on an interstate highway, or a structure fire.

The bad news is that slightly more than \$2 billion in requests did not receive funding, and furthermore, emergency medical service preparedness is not currently eligible for grants under this program. Congress authorized up to \$900 million for the program each year through fiscal year 2004, but only \$360 million of that authorization has been appropriated for fiscal year 2001. The appropriation should be changed to the full \$900 million to include emergency medical services.

We do recommend two changes to the grant program in addition to funding the full amount.

Grants for terrorism preparedness to fire, rescue, and EMS departments serving large populations, Federal facilities, and specific target hazards should receive favorable consideration under the program. In fiscal year 2001, these proposals would not have been eligible for consideration at all.

And two, emergency medical services are an integral part of the preparedness puzzle and should be eligible to receive FIRE Act money. Their role in patient triage, pre-hospital care, decontamination, and incident management at a mass casualty incident should be plainly evident. They need training and equipment as well.

#### PREPARED STATEMENT

In summary, we hope that we have provided the committee with a snapshot of the challenges that we faced in the post-September 11 world. The World Trade Center events certainly demonstrate that it is possible for terrorists to engineer an incident that even the world's largest fire department has difficulty in managing. Nevertheless, we must still strive to be prepared for whatever occurs. We must enhance our strengths and fix but not inappropriately focus on our weaknesses. This committee can help by increasing funding to the Assistance to Firefighters grant program and improving the impact of the program to meet the threats that our first responders may face today.

Thank you for your time, and I will be available to answer questions.

[The statement follows:]

#### PREPARED STATEMENT OF PETER H. MORRIS

Good morning, Madam Chairwoman and members of the Committee. I am Assistant Chief Peter Morris of the Bethesda-Chevy Chase Rescue Squad. I would like to take the opportunity to commend Senator Mikulski and the other members of the sub-committee for providing the important leadership needed on this critical issue. Senator Mikulski recently visited our station; the firefighter/rescuers in our department were very impressed with her interest and in-depth knowledge about the fire/rescue services. We would not be able to do our jobs well without the support of our elected leaders. We consider the members of this sub-committee to be a vital part of our team. For Senator Mikulski, the extra time you spent at our station sent a strong message to our members that you and your colleagues are committed to finding practical solutions that help our service and ultimately the community. We thank you for that.

B-CC Rescue Squad is located in Montgomery County, Maryland. Our department provides 24-hour fire, rescue, and emergency medical services to a suburban-urban area of southern Montgomery County, MD and portions of northwest Washington, DC. The Bethesda-Chevy Chase Rescue Squad is unusual in that it provides fire, rescue, and emergency medical service without the benefit of tax funds from Montgomery County or the District of Columbia. All our services are free. Although we are part of the Montgomery County Fire and Rescue Service, all funds for capital improvement and operations are raised primarily through individual contributions

and foundation grants. We are a *vibrant, successful volunteer organization* that defies the myth that volunteer fire and rescue departments can only exist in rural, low call volume systems. In 2001, Bethesda-Chevy Chase Rescue Squad units responded to 10,957 emergency incidents.

I have been asked to provide a local responder's view of the terrorism and disaster preparedness world. It is important to note that while we consider ourselves to be a local community based fire/rescue department, we do not serve the average community. Our response area is replete with foreign embassies, residences of senior government officials and other dignitaries, the National Institutes of Health, the National Naval Medical Center, four Metro stations, and a number of other high-profile government facilities and potential targets for terrorist attacks.

Over the years we have responded to major incidents in neighboring jurisdictions, including the District of Columbia. We share a close, daily working relationship with the District of Columbia Fire and Emergency Medical Services Department (DCF&EMSD), which means that we are one of the first outside resources that are called upon to assist the District in response to a major disaster. On January 13, 1983, we responded with significant resources when an Air Florida jetliner crashed into the 14th Street Bridge and, almost simultaneously, a Metro train derailed at the Federal Triangle station. On September 11th, 2001, our units were first called to assist in the District, but were sent to the Pentagon once it became clear no targets had been struck in the city. Four of our Medic Units, a special air supply truck and a B-CC Command Officer were on-scene at the Pentagon and back-filling Arlington County fire stations within the first hour of the attack. Our air supply unit supported firefighting operations at the Pentagon for the first 24 hours. That same unit was parked outside of this building for more than a week, supporting the clean-up operations in the Hart Senate Office Building.

One of the most fundamental concepts in determining what first responders need in order to respond to terrorist attack is an assessment of the threats we may potentially face. The problem that emergency managers face is weighing the value of protecting against a generic threat of a terrorist attack versus preparing to respond to actual known emergencies such as heart attacks, auto collisions, and structure fires which occur every day. Our challenge is to balance these competing needs in crafting an overall strategy for our operations, the community we serve, and our neighboring jurisdictions.

Our experience responding to major incidents over the past several decades and our recent experience in responding to the September 11 attack on the Pentagon has taught us four major lessons.

First, all of these incidents reaffirm the critical role of local fire, rescue, EMS and police departments. Local governments including their fire, rescue, emergency medical service, law enforcement and public health departments are the Nation's primary defense when a terrorist attack occurs. Local fire and rescue services are the only agencies that can respond within minutes and save lives while there is still time. They must be equipped to provide initial response, immediate rescue and treatment, and scene stabilization capabilities.

Second, The development of Federal assets such as various FEMA units, including Urban Search & Rescue (USAR) teams, the Metropolitan Medical Response System, and Civil Support Teams are good, but cannot solve the terrorism response problem alone. With the exception of designated National Security events like the Olympics and the Superbowl, where Federal assets are likely to be pre-staged and ready to respond, the response times of Federal assets may be extended. Local responders must be equipped and prepared to deal with at least the first several hours—if not the first 24 hours of a terrorist attack.

Third, special efforts and attention need to be devoted to high threat areas. We know that terrorists are more likely to select symbolic targets, including high-profile government facilities. We believe special efforts should be devoted to ensuring that departments in and around high-threat targets have the information and resources they need to respond effectively. Many of these targets are Federal facilities, or where the Federal government has public safety responsibilities, such as foreign embassies.

Lastly, our department stresses the application of the "Daily Routine Doctrine" to our Domestic Preparedness plans and our overall operations. The "Daily Routine Doctrine" is a common sense theory in emergency planning that espouses the idea that "what you do regularly—you do well." It argues that training, techniques, and equipment required to mitigate large emergencies must be part of daily fire, rescue and emergency medical services operations, if these incidents are to be managed effectively. Restated, if we integrate terrorism preparedness into everyday training and equipment needs, we are most likely to succeed when the next terrorist incident occurs.

One program already in existence that is helping to meet the mandate of the Daily Routine Doctrine is the Assistance to Firefighter's Grant Program. This program is using Federal dollars to bolster the Nation's fire and rescue systems.

The good news about the Assistance to Firefighter's Grant Program is that it gave out almost \$100 million to improve basic fire and rescue infrastructure in fiscal year 2001. These improvements will help all types of emergency response whether to a terrorist bombing, auto collision on an interstate highway, or a structure fire.

The bad news is that slightly more than \$2 billion in requests did not receive funding. Furthermore, Emergency Medical Services (EMS) preparedness is not currently eligible for grants under this program. Congress authorized up to \$900 million for the program each year through fiscal year 2004, but only \$360 million of that authorization has been appropriated for fiscal year 2002. The appropriation should be changed to the full \$900 million and should include Emergency Medical Services. Departments need this money now to meet the increased demands being placed on them.

We support and encourage strengthening the Peer Review Panel process that was used to select grant awards. This process performed extremely well given the tight timelines and constraints that were mandated. This method of allocation provided an excellent evaluation of the grant proposals with a quick turn-around time on the funds. Also important is that these grants were awarded directly to fire departments with very little indirect costs used for administration. This direct method of awarding these grants with low administrative costs is fantastic and should be congratulated and continued.

We do recommend two changes to the Assistance to Firefighter's Grant Program in addition to funding the full \$900 million:

- Grants for terrorism preparedness to fire, rescue, and EMS departments serving areas with large populations, Federal facilities, specific target hazards or other demonstrated needs should receive favorable consideration under the Assistance to Firefighter's Grant Program. In fiscal year 2001, these proposals would not have been eligible for consideration at all.
- Emergency Medical Services are an integral piece of the preparedness puzzle and should be eligible to receive Fire Act money. Their role in patient triage, pre-hospital care, decontamination, and incident management at a mass casualty incident should be plainly evident. They need training and equipment as well.

In summary, we hope we have provided the Committee with a snap shot of some of the challenges we face in the post-September 11th world. The World Trade Center events certainly demonstrate that it is possible for terrorists to engineer an incident that even the World's largest fire department has difficulty in managing.

Nevertheless, we must still strive to be prepared for whatever occurs. We must enhance our strengths and, fix, but not inappropriately focus on, our weaknesses. This Committee can help by increasing funding to the Assistant to Firefighters Grant Program and improving the impact of the program to meet the threats that our first responders may face today.

Thank you for your time, and I will be available to answer any questions you may have.

Senator MIKULSKI. Excellent. Thank you very much for that detailed and compelling testimony.

Chief Paulsell?

**STATEMENT OF STEPHEN D. PAULSELL, CHIEF, BOONE COUNTY FIRE PROTECTION DISTRICT AND SPONSORING AGENCY CHIEF, MISSOURI TASK FORCE 1**

Mr. PAULSELL. Thank you. Good morning, Madam Chair and members of the committee. Thank you for the opportunity to speak with you this morning.

In the interest of the 10-minute rule, I will be presenting an abbreviated text, and the full text and supporting documents are being provided to you.

Before I begin my comments, I would like to take this opportunity on behalf of our task force and all Missourians to thank my good friend, Senator Kit Bond, for his tireless efforts in assisting our organization as we work to achieve our designation as a Fed-

eral task force. His enthusiastic efforts here, coupled with the perseverance of our people back home, have produced a resource that our entire State has become very proud of. Senator, we thank you very much.

On September 11, as the world watched in horror as the events of that morning unfolded, over 100 Missourians quickly moved methodically in preparation for an activation to a disaster site, as did other task forces throughout the country. Members of Missouri Task Force 1, 1 of 28 FEMA urban search and rescue task forces, knew that they would be activated. Over 76,000 pounds of equipment, 62 highly trained search and rescue specialists and 4 search canines were ready for assignment. Work schedules were cleared. Family commitments were deferred. Baseline medical exams were conducted, and equipment was loaded. This was to be our first Federal mission, an incredible first test.

By the afternoon of September 12th, Missouri Task Force 1 was in lower Manhattan working side by side seven other FEMA task forces and the incredible firefighters of New York City.

During the course of the consequence management following the attacks at the Trade Center and the Pentagon, 25 of the 28 task forces were deployed over a 3-week period. Clearly these men and women performed admirably under incredibly difficult, dangerous, and challenging conditions. While the personal tragedies seemed endless, the FEMA urban search and rescue family also suffered great personal tragedy with the loss of many members of New York City's task force, and specifically FDNY Special Operations Chief Ray Downey who, in addition to being the godfather of our system, was a very special friend and mentor to all of us. Ray gave so much to this program. He believed in it. He lived it. He designed it. He dedicated his life to it. He died in the lobby of the second tower doing what he had always done: saving people.

On behalf of some 5,200 search and rescue specialists across this great country who gallantly serve in the FEMA urban search and rescue system, I come before you today in his memory with our thoughts, our recommendations, our frustrations, and our intense and unyielding desire to make this system the system that Ray always dreamed it should be.

Our world, as we know it, has changed. Those of us in the urban search and rescue business clearly understand that and quite frankly knew that long before September 11. We are clearly on the front line of the Federal Government's response to not only natural disasters but to acts of terrorism as well.

I feel it is very important to ensure that the uniqueness of this program is made clear here today. The Federal Government has at its immediate disposal 28 heavy search and rescue units unmatched anywhere in this world today. They are quietly domiciled in 28 different communities across this country and staffed by rescue workers serving in their local fire departments every day. They train, they prepare, they maintain equipment, and they make themselves available on 6 hours' notice to go anywhere in the country. Yet, they are not on the Federal payroll.

When activated, a 62-member team goes out the door. They carry fiber optic search cameras, concrete cutting chain saws, and an emergency room. They are self-sustaining for 72 hours and carry



everything they need, including the kitchen sink. Most of all, what they bring to an event is an incredible level of expertise and an insatiable desire to help. These people are the absolute best at what they do.

Dollar for dollar, pound for pound, not only is this partnership between the Federal Government and local governments an incredible value, it inserts the local response mentality into the Federal system. These task forces have become the Federal Government's rapid reaction force, the domestic Marines, if you will, who if given sufficient resources, can establish an early disaster beachhead and commence operations much sooner than other tactical Federal units. We are the civilian equivalent to the military special operations force. Our people are trained in all relative national standards in rescue, emergency medicine, hazardous materials, and emergency incident management. It does not take us 48 hours to activate. These teams are multifaceted, mobile, self-contained, and capable of interfacing with local incident commanders and clearly understand how to move fast in a crisis when time is so very critical.

We, along with first responders across this great country, now find ourselves on the front lines of homeland defense in this new and expanding era of terrorism. This was again clearly validated on September 11.

As Congress moves forward on issues funding relative to homeland defense, response to terrorism, and a plethora of other funding initiatives, we come before you to simply ask that consideration be given to the following concerns regarding an existing and invaluable program. We have stood on the sidelines for years as we watched billions of dollars pass by us. We believe this is our moment.

Obviously the equipment operated by these task forces is very critical. Since the inception of the program in the early 1990's, the task forces have yet to become fully equipped. Using the meager annual Federal grant of \$150,000 per year to support training exercises, maintain equipment, and provide protective safety equipment for personnel, the task forces have been unable to expand their equipment cache. In fact, the annual grants are not nearly sufficient for us to even maintain our individual systems, let alone enhance them. It is a travesty that, for over a decade now, the Federal Government has not yet fully equipped its own elite search and rescue teams.

We are very worried about our inability to effect search and rescue operations in an environment contaminated by weapons of mass destruction. We must immediately equip these task forces with the appropriate protections so that we may operate in a dirty bomb environment.

Additionally, as the Federal Government's rapid reaction force, this increased capability will enable us to more quickly assist a local government in dealing with a direct act of chemical or biological terrorism.

Each task force maintains a roster strength of 186 personnel. They give of their time and their talents to this effort by constantly training and preparing the equipment. Task forces incur overtime

expenses, insurance expenses, training expenses, and protective clothing expenses for our personnel.

Additionally, the task forces incur equipment maintenance, repair, and replacement expenses. Many of the pharmaceutical and logistical supplies have shelf lives and must be replaced periodically. Some of the equipment is now in excess of 10 years old. In addition to maintenance issues surrounding parts availability, there is always increased technological advances we are financially unable to take advantage of.

In short, the annual funding is embarrassingly inadequate for the type of service we are expected to provide. Would you feel comfortable hanging from a 15-story building on a 10-year-old rope?

This program is one of the most cost effective programs in the Federal system and is at the tip of the spear in the Federal Government's response to a disaster. And yet, we attempt to operate it on a shoestring. With each passing day, we get farther behind in equipment currency and dependability, we miss training opportunities, task force managers spend more time and energy defending their local support of the program to their local bean counters, and the tip of the spear continues to dull. We must provide appropriate annual grant funding to these units to ensure their viability, availability, and dependability.

We are required to be on the tarmac within 6 hours of activation and await military airlift. Ground transportation requires two tractor-trailers and a bus. Most task forces must rely on rental agreements for trucks and buses upon activation. Valuable time is lost acquiring and loading vehicles.

We are also very concerned about the ongoing availability of military airlift as we continue to support the war on terrorism. In a search and rescue environment, obviously response time is critical. Sufficient grant funding should also be provided annually to ensure that these task forces are preloaded on reliable ground transportation assets and can respond immediately upon activation.

Your Federal task forces are domiciled in local fire departments, fire departments that day in and day out take care of people immediately. We make tactical decisions in seconds and policy decisions within minutes, a concept seemingly foreign here in D.C. The sluggishness in the bureaucracy that we continually deal with is the most frustrating and puzzling thing any of us have ever experienced.

We are constantly amazed at how many people have to review the simplest of documents and seemingly it takes a minimum of a month for each. We constantly seek direction and support, yet we continually seem to find ourselves in a quagmire of in and out boxes, OMB audits, general counsel reviews, rulemaking, canceled meetings, and the never-ending pursuit of a decision maker. This is not a new problem. It has existed for years.

The significance of this program has been proven. The dedication of 5,200 search and rescue specialists is unmatched. In this regard, we simply ask that the proper direction and resources be given to FEMA to ensure that the proper priority, program emphasis, and attention be given the program to ensure its responsiveness to the agencies that participate in the program and this country.

In conclusion, I would like to thank you for your time and attention. It is indeed an honor and a privilege to be here with you. As we sit here this morning, I know that there are 5,200 highly dedicated and skilled rescue workers around this country valiantly waiting to step into harm's way if needed. Know also that those same 5,200 are energized with optimism in light of our discussions here this morning. They have spent years persevering with meager resources and yet their spirit is unwavering. I also thank you on their behalf.

PREPARED STATEMENT

We are simply asking, particularly in light of current and anticipated future threats, that the FEMA urban search and rescue program be supported properly and fully. It is an incredible and very unique resource unmatched anywhere in the Federal response system. Our criticality to our Nation's response to terrorism in the future will be immense. We simply want to perform to our fullest potential. In our business, there is no room for mediocrity.

Thank you very much.  
[The statement follows:]

PREPARED STATEMENT OF STEPHEN D. PAULSELL

Good Morning. Madam Chair and members of the committee, thank you for the opportunity to speak with you this morning.

My name is Steve Paulsell. I serve as Fire Chief of the Boone County, Missouri Fire Protection District and also have the distinct honor of serving as the sponsoring agency chief for Missouri Task Force 1, one of your 28 FEMA Urban Search and Rescue Task Forces.

Before I begin my comments, I would like to take this opportunity, on behalf of our task force and all Missourians, to thank my good friend, Senator Kit Bond, for his tireless efforts in assisting our organization as we worked to achieve our designation as a Federal task force. His enthusiastic efforts here, coupled with the perseverance of our people back home, have produced a resource that our entire State has become very proud of. Senator, we thank you very much.

On September 11, as the world watched in horror as the events of that morning unfolded, over one hundred Missourians moved quickly and methodically in preparation for an activation to a disaster site, as did the other task forces throughout the system. Members of Missouri Task Force 1, one of 28 FEMA Urban Search and Rescue Task Forces knew that they would be activated. Over 76,000 pounds of equipment, 62 highly trained search and rescue specialists and 4 search canines were readied for assignment. Work schedules were cleared, family commitments were deferred, baseline medical exams were conducted and equipment was loaded. This was to be our first Federal mission—an incredible first test.

Within four hours, the official activation orders were received. Under our agreement with FEMA, we were to be on the tarmac at Whiteman Air Force Base within six hours of our activation. Our people and equipment cleared security and were loaded on 3 Air Guard C-130's which would take them to McGuire Air Force Base in New Jersey. Upon their arrival at McGuire, they were billeted for a few hours for some badly needed sleep. During the night, they were joined by three of our fellow task forces from California.

Shortly after noon on September 12th, the first four task forces to arrive by air were transported via escorted convoy into Manhattan where they established their base of operations at the Javits Convention Center, joining four other Federal task forces that had previously arrived by ground transportation—Pennsylvania, Ohio, Massachusetts and Indiana. By that evening, they were on assignment at Ground Zero at the World Trade Center and, for they next ten days, worked around the clock, side by side with seven other FEMA task forces and the incredible firefighters of New York City.

During the course of consequence management following the attacks at the Trade Center and Pentagon, 25 of the 28 task forces were deployed over a three-week period. Clearly, these men and women performed admirably under incredibly difficult, dangerous and challenging conditions. While the personal tragedies seem endless,

the FEMA Urban Search and Rescue family also suffered great personal tragedy with the loss of many members of New York City's task force and, specifically, FDNY Special Operations Chief Ray Downey who, in addition to being the godfather of our system, was a very special friend and mentor to all of us. Ray gave so much to this program. He believed in it. He lived it. He designed it. He dedicated his life to it. He died in the lobby of the second tower, doing what he had always done—saving people. On behalf of some 5,200 search and rescue specialists across this great country who gallantly serve in the FEMA Urban Search and Rescue System, I come before you today, in his memory, with our thoughts, our recommendations, our frustrations and our intense and unyielding desire to make this system what Ray always dreamed it should be.

FEMA's Urban Search and Rescue System was conceived in the early 1990's. It was born of a growing concern for local and State governments' inability to deal with the collapse of steel and reinforced concrete buildings in, primarily, earthquake events. Through cooperative partnerships with 28 local fire departments, FEMA has developed a national rescue response system and integrated it into the Federal Response Plan. While the system has been activated for hurricanes, tornadoes and earthquakes, its most notable missions have been to the Oklahoma City bombing and, of course the Pentagon and World Trade Center.

Funding has been meager, at best. Early Federal grant funding was approximately \$80,000 annually. In 1997, Senator Bond was instrumental in increasing the annual allocation and, today, each task force receives \$150,000 annually. Additional funding for some equipment acquisition has been provided during disasters through the Stafford Act. Unfortunately, not all task forces have been able to take advantage of that. It is also very important to point out that a great deal of the operating expenses of these task forces to insure their readiness has been absorbed by the sponsoring agencies.

Our world, as we all know, has changed. Those of us in the urban search and rescue business clearly understand that and, quite frankly, knew that long before September 11. A process, although very minimal, had already been undertaken to bring 6 of the 28 task forces to a level of capability, which will enable them to function in an environment contaminated by chemical, biological or nuclear agents—Weapons of Mass Destruction. This has been done in anticipation of next week's Olympic games in Salt Lake City.

We are, clearly, on the front line of the Federal government's response to, not only natural disasters but to acts of terrorism, as well.

I feel it very important to insure that the uniqueness of this program is made clear here today. The Federal government has, at its immediate disposal, 28 heavy search and rescue units unmatched anywhere in this world today. They are quietly domiciled in 28 different communities across this country and staffed by rescue workers serving in their local fire departments everyday. They train, they prepare, they maintain equipment and they make themselves available on six hours notice to go anywhere in the country yet, they are not on the Federal payroll.

When activated, a 62 member team goes out the door with rescue specialists, technical and canine search specialists, physicians, structural engineers, communications specialists, hazardous materials technicians, paramedics and nurses, heavy equipment operators, safety specialists, logisticians and incident management personnel. They carry fiber optic search cameras and concrete cutting chain saws. They are self-sustaining for 72 hours and carry everything they need including the kitchen sink. Most of all, what they bring to the event is an incredible level of expertise and an insatiable desire to help. These people are the absolute best at what they do.

Dollar for dollar—pound for pound, not only is this partnership between the Federal government and local governments an incredible value, it inserts that local response mentality into the Federal system. These task forces have become the Federal government's rapid reaction force—the domestic marines, if you will, who, if given sufficient resources, can establish an early disaster beachhead and commence operations much sooner than other tactical Federal units. We are the civilian equivalent to the military special operations forces. Our people are trained to all relative national standards in rescue, emergency medicine, hazardous materials and emergency incident management. It does not take us 48 hours to activate. These teams are multi-faceted, mobile, self-contained, and capable of interfacing with local incident commanders and clearly understand how to move fast in a crisis when time is so very critical. Most importantly, however, these units are highly flexible and readily adaptable.

I come before you today on behalf of the men and women who comprise this system. My comments stem from discussions with task force leaders and sponsoring

agency chiefs and, they come from our intense desire to make this system right—the way Ray Downey wanted it.

We, along with first responders across this great country, now find ourselves on the front lines of homeland defense in this new and expanding era of terrorism. This was, again, clearly validated on September 11.

As Congress moves forward on issues funding relative to Homeland Defense, response to terrorism and a plethora of other funding initiatives, we come before you to simply ask that consideration be given to the following concerns regarding an existing and invaluable program. We have stood on the sidelines for years as we watched billions of dollars pass by us. We believe this is our moment.

#### TASK FORCE EQUIPMENT CACHES

There is an urgent need to completely equip the 28 FEMA Urban Search and Rescue Task Forces with basic compliment of equipment prescribed by FEMA.

Obviously, the equipment operated by these task forces is very critical. They deploy with approximately 80,000 lbs. of search, rescue and support equipment. A full compliment or cache of equipment is valued at \$1.8M. Since the inception of the program in the early 1990's, the task forces have yet to become fully equipped. Using the meager annual Federal grant of \$150,000 per year to support training exercises, maintain equipment and provide protective safety equipment for personnel, the task forces have been unable to expand their equipment cache. In fact, the annual grants are not nearly sufficient for us to even maintain our individual systems, let alone enhance them.

We must complete these equipment caches. It is a travesty that, for over a decade now, the Federal government has not yet fully equipped its own elite search and rescue teams.

An immediate allocation of \$10M is necessary to meet this need.

#### WEAPONS OF MASS DESTRUCTION PROTECTION FOR TASK FORCES

All FEMA US&R Task Forces must be capable of operating in an environment contaminated by Weapons of Mass Destruction.

We hear a great deal, these days, about weapons of mass destruction. We are also hearing growing and, in our opinion, very real concern over dirty bomb scenarios. A dirty bomb is a device in which a conventional explosive device is laced with a chemical, biological or nuclear agent. Our task forces will be called upon to effect search and rescue activities in a collapse environment. We MUST be capable of providing agent identification and personal protection for our people while engaged in a search and rescue mission.

Each task force carries a small complement of hazardous materials mitigation equipment. This equipment is designed to assist us in minimal protection of our personnel, should a hazardous substance be encountered in a conventional building collapse but it is not sufficient to meet the demands that will be created by a dirty bomb.

Additionally, as the Federal government's rapid response force, this increased capability will enable us to more quickly assist a local government in dealing with a direct act of chemical or biological terrorism.

Six of the 28 teams, as a result of the Salt Lake Olympics, have been trained and equipped to this level.

I would be remiss if I did not take this opportunity to express another concern relative to this entire WMD issue. The Federal government has vested significant funds in the Department of Defense in recent years to enhance chemical, biological and nuclear defense capabilities. In our estimation, those programs, particularly now at a time of international crisis, are not positioned, nor always readily available, to provide the homeland defense service they were originally designed for. We strongly suggest that the entire Federal response plan for domestic WMD events be reevaluated prior to further funding or expansion with strong consideration being given to the responsibilities and capabilities of first responders.

An immediate allocation of \$31.6M will provide appropriate equipment and training.

#### PROPERLY FUND ANNUAL GRANT PROGRAM FOR TASK FORCES

Adequate annual grant funding must be provided to the task forces to insure they are capable of operating at maximum effectiveness. Present funding is terribly inadequate.

Each task force maintains a roster strength of 186 personnel. They give of their time and talents to this effort by constantly training and preparing the equipment.

Task forces incur overtime expenses, insurance expenses, training expenses and protective clothing expenses for our personnel.

Additionally, the task forces incur equipment maintenance, repair, and replacement expenses. Many of the pharmaceutical and logistical supplies have shelf lives and must be replaced periodically. Some of the equipment is now in excess of ten years old. In addition to maintenance issues surrounding parts availability, there is always increased technological advances we are, financially, unable to take advantage of.

In short, the annual funding is embarrassingly inadequate for the type of service we are expected to provide. Would you feel comfortable hanging from a 15 story building on a ten year old rope?

This program is one of the most cost effective programs in the Federal system and is at the tip of the spear in the Federal government's response to a disaster. And yet, we attempt to operate it on a shoestring. With each passing day, we get farther behind in equipment currency and dependability, we miss training opportunities, task force managers spend more time and energy defending their local support of the program to their local bean counters and the tip of the spear continues to dull. We must provide appropriate annual grant funding to these units to insure their viability, availability and dependability.

Annual grant needs per task force is \$1M.

#### TASK FORCE TRANSPORTATION

Funding must be provided to enhance the mobility of task forces by ground.

Under the Federal response plan, upon receipt of activation orders from FEMA, we are required to move 62 members and 80,000 lbs. of equipment very quickly. Our orders direct us to a point of departure at an Air Force base. We are required to be on the tarmac within 6 hours of activation and await military airlift. Ground transportation requires two tractor-trailers and a bus. Air transport then requires 3 C-130s or one C-5A military airframe.

Most task forces must rely on rental agreements for trucks and buses upon activation. Valuable time is lost acquiring and loading trucks.

We are also very concerned about the ongoing availability of military airlift as we continue to support the war on terrorism. In a search and rescue environment, obviously, response time is critical. Sufficient grant funding should also be provided annually to insure that these task forces are preloaded on reliable ground transportation assets and can respond immediately upon activation. In most areas of our country, several task forces could arrive on site by ground long before airlift arrives.

Annual system cost: \$4M

#### TASK FORCE SYSTEM EXPANSION

Following catastrophic events as were experienced on September 11, there is predictable discussion regarding additional task forces. Should an expansion be warranted, the most cost effective approach is to enhance the task forces.

There is always discussion following events like Oklahoma City and September 11 regarding the possible expansion of the FEMA US&R system to include additional teams. Several important points must be made in this regard.

First, the existing 28 task forces, in our opinion, are under utilized. This poses training and proficiency challenges. A further dilution of the system would have catastrophic effects on the existing task forces. Even in the aftermath of September 11, two of the existing task forces were not used.

Second, should there be a desire to expand the program, based on sound threat assessment, the acquisition of additional caches for the existing task forces would double the Federal capacity without incurring additional personnel or training expenses. Specifically, we are staffed and trained three deep in each position to insure immediate deployment capability. Sixty two go and 124 stay home. Within the first 24-36 hours each of our task forces could easily field another 62-member trained team. All we lack are the additional equipment caches. In other words, for an additional \$50.4M, we could double the system capacity utilizing existing trained personnel.

#### INTERNATIONAL RESPONSE OF ADDITIONAL TASK FORCES

With a growing threat to our interests abroad, an expansion of our international response system is warranted. Presently, only two of our 28 task forces are prepared and authorized for overseas deployment.

As we move to enhance our homeland defenses, the vulnerability of our facilities and those of our allies abroad will increase.

Presently, two of the 28 task forces are equipped and maintain agreements with the Office of Foreign Disaster Assistance within the State Department to respond outside the United States. We do not believe this is adequate and immediate steps should be taken to facilitate the overseas deployment of any of the task forces should they be needed on foreign soil.

This will involve the acquisition of additional logistical supplies, provision for passport acquisition, immunizations and an adjustment in the State Department's philosophy regarding the need for additional teams for international deployment.

#### TASK FORCE SYSTEM ENHANCEMENTS

FEMA's Incident Support Teams are vital to US&R missions. Additionally, task force readiness evaluations are essential to maintaining optimum capability. Both programs require additional support.

Upon deployment of Urban Search and Rescue assets, FEMA deploys Incident Support Teams (ISTs) to interface with the local jurisdiction and provide management and coordination of task force resources. This is a very vital function and maximizes the utilization and efficiency of the task forces in addition to facilitating a cooperative effort in the local/Federal interface.

An increase in funding is necessary to insure that appropriate and timely task force readiness evaluations can be effected. It is critical that this quality assurance system is maintained and conducted. The present system is only capable of conducting one or two evaluations per year.

The annual cost for IST support and readiness evaluations is \$5M.

#### PROGRAM ADMINISTRATION AND SUPPORT

Historically, the task forces have experienced significant frustrations with the Federal bureaucracy. In light of immediate and expanding threats and the need for a system that is responsive to changing threats, additional support and program emphasis is required at FEMA.

Your Federal task forces are domiciled in local fire departments—fire departments that day in and day out take care of people—immediately. We make tactical decisions in seconds and policy decisions within minutes—a concept seemingly foreign here in D.C. The sluggishness and the bureaucracy that we continually deal with is the most frustrating and puzzling thing any of us have ever experienced.

We are constantly amazed at how many people have to review the simplest of documents and, seemingly, it takes a minimum of a month for each. We constantly seek direction and support yet we continually seem to find ourselves in quagmire of in and out boxes, OMB audits, General Counsel reviews, rulemaking, cancelled meetings and the never ending pursuit of a decision maker. This is not a new problem. It has existed for years.

We ask that program staff be empowered to provide direction and we be allowed to operate a responsive program capable of saving lives. It is our mindset—it is the way we do business. While we are sure that FEMA's urban search and rescue program is woefully understaffed, we also believe that it has more to do with the mentality and, perhaps, the conflict between two drastically different delivery cultures. Particularly in this time of uncertainty, we must be able to adjust quickly to meet changing needs.

We realize that the Federal government, clearly, must do business differently than we do at the local level but we also propose that, particularly in light of the criticality of our mission that some direction be given to this program to streamline its ability to do business. Specialized rescue course development takes two years, policy and procedures never get completed and rulemaking to develop more equitable MOA's seems to get stalled someplace for up to three years—we can't even find it.

The significance of this program has been proven. The dedication of 5,200 search and rescue specialists is unmatched. In this regard, we simply ask that the proper direction and resources be given to FEMA to insure that the proper priority, program emphasis and attention be given the program to insure its responsiveness to agencies that participate in the system.

#### CONCLUSION

In conclusion, I would like to thank you for your time and attention. It is indeed an honor and a privilege to be here and know that this type of interest exists for your Federal urban search and rescue program. As we sit here this morning, know that there are 5,200 highly dedicated and skilled rescue workers around this country valiantly waiting to step into harm's way, if needed. Know also that those same 5,200 are energized with optimism in light of our discussions here this morning.

They have spent years persevering with meager resources and yet, their spirit is unwavering. I also thank you on their behalf.

We are simply asking, particularly in light of current and anticipated future threats, that the FEMA Urban Search and Rescue Program be supported properly and fully. It is an incredible and very unique resource unmatched anywhere in the world. Our criticality to our Nation's response to terrorism in the future will be immense. We simply want to perform to our fullest potential. In our business, there is no room for mediocrity.

Thank You.

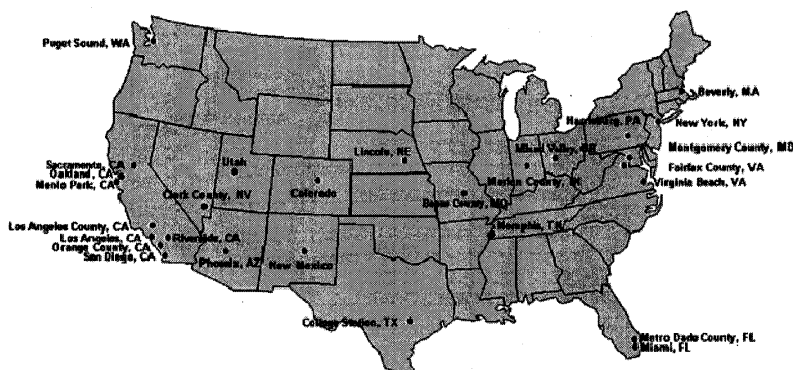
#### SUPPORTING DOCUMENTATION

##### NATIONAL URBAN SEARCH AND RESCUE RESPONSE SYSTEM

The National Urban Search and Rescue (US&R) Response System, established under the authority of the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) in 1989 is a framework for structuring local emergency services personnel into integrated disaster response task forces.

These task forces, complete with necessary tools and equipment, and required skills and techniques, can be deployed by FEMA for the rescue of victims of structural collapse.

### US&R Response System Task Forces



#### ABOUT US&R

Urban search-and-rescue (US&R) involves the location, rescue (extrication), and initial medical stabilization of victims trapped in confined spaces. Structural collapse is most often the cause of victims being trapped, but victims may also be trapped in transportation accidents, mines and collapsed trenches.

Urban search-and-rescue is considered a "multi-hazard" discipline, as it may be needed for a variety of emergencies or disasters, including earthquakes, hurricanes, typhoons, storms and tornadoes, floods, dam failures, technological accidents, terrorist activities, and hazardous materials releases. The events may be slow in developing, as in the case of hurricanes, or sudden, as in the case of earthquakes.

#### INCIDENT SUPPORT TEAM

The Incident Support Teams supports the US&R Task Forces in accomplishing their mission through logistical, electronic and coordination expertise.

#### FEMA TASK FORCE TOOLS AND EQUIPMENT

The equipment cache used to support a task force weighs nearly 60,000 pounds and is worth about \$1.4 million. Add the task force members to the cache and you can completely fill a military C-141 transport or two C130's.

Logistics specialists handle the more than 16,400 pieces of equipment needed to support the task force. To ensure rapid response and to avoid burdening the already



suffering community more, the task force equipment cache must be a mobile emergency room, construction site, communications center, high-tech engineering firm and camp rolled into one.

The equipment cache allows the task force to be totally self-sufficient for up to four days.

The equipment cache consists of five types of equipment: medical, rescue, communications, technical support and logistics.

Medical supplies include various medicines, intravenous fluids, blankets, suture sets, airways, tracheal tubes, defibrillators, burn treatment supplies, bone saws and scalpels.

The search component of the equipment is a lot like the equipment at a normal construction site. Common building supplies such as concrete saws, jackhammers, drills, lumber and rope are used to safely and slowly remove victims from the rubble.

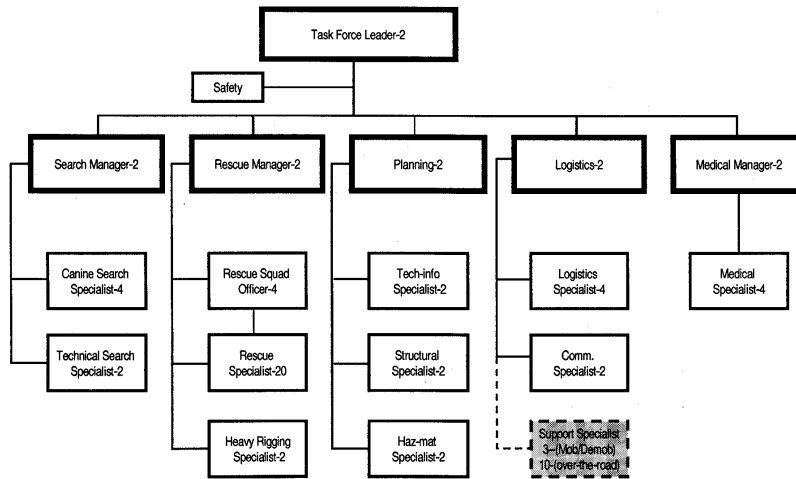
The communications section allows rescuers to stay in contact in case of a find or an evacuation. Generators, lights, radios, cellular phones, laptop computers and other electronics equipment are used.

More than 500 items make up the technical support cache, the most high-tech of all the equipment. Snake-like cameras and fiber optic scopes are used to locate victims trapped in rubble. Sensitive listening devices that can detect even the slightest human sound locate victims who are still alive.

The logistics section cares for the needs of the rescuers as they work in 12-hour shifts around the clock. Supplies include sleeping bags, cots, food and water, as well as cold weather gear.

### US&R TASK FORCE ORGANIZATIONAL CHART

January 2000



## WORLD TRADE CENTER, NYC US&R TASK FORCE MOBILIZATION SCHEDULE

US&R TASK FORCE MOBILIZATION SCHEDULE  
September 20, 2001 1900

TASK FORCE	MODE	NEW YORK CITY (SEPTEMBER)										(OCTOBER)									
		11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21	22	23	24	25	26	27	28	29	30
FA-TFI	Ground	A	→	→	→	→	→	→	→	D	T										
MA-TFI	Ground	A	→	→	→	→	→	→	→	D	T										
OB-TFI	Ground	A	→	→	→	→	→	→	→	D	T										
IN-TFI	Ground	A	→	→	→	→	→	→	→	D	T										
CA-TFI	Air	A	→	→	→	→	→	→	→	D	T										
CA-TFS	Air	A	→	→	→	→	→	→	→	D	T										
CA-TF1	Air	A	→	→	→	→	→	→	→	D	T										
MO-TFI	Air	A	→	→	→	→	→	→	→	D	T										
FL-TF2	Ground	A																			
TX-TFI	Air	A																			
FL-TFI	Ground	A																			
DT-TFI	Air	A																			
AC-TFI	Air	A																			
CA-TFS	Air	A																			
WA-TFI	Air	A																			
CA-TFS	Air	A																			
CO-TFI	Air	L																			
NE-TFI	Air	L																			
NY-TFI	Air	L																			
CA-TFS	Air	L																			
CA-TF4	Air	L																			
CA-TF2	Air	L																			

**LEGEND**  
 R = RAPID INTERVENTION TEAM  
 A = ACTIVATION D = DEMOBILIZATION L = ALERT  
 S = SPECIAL OPERATIONS COMMAND T = TRAVEL

### URBAN SEARCH AND RESCUE: COMMONLY ASKED QUESTIONS

Washington, D.C., September 18, 2001—The terrorist attacks on the World Trade Center and the Pentagon have thrust FEMA's Urban Search and Rescue (US&R) teams—and rescue teams in general—into the spotlight. Their important work has transfixed a world, brought a surge of gratitude and support, and raised many questions. Below are some answers to questions being asked about US&R and the rescue efforts.

*What is FEMA's National US&R response system?*

This system is a framework for structuring local emergency personnel into integrated disaster response task forces. These task forces, complete with necessary tools and equipment, and specialized training and skills, are deployed by FEMA in times of catastrophic structural collapse.

*How many FEMA US&R teams are there?*

There are 28 teams: one from Arizona; eight from California; one from Colorado; two from Florida; two from Virginia, and one each from Indiana, Maryland, Massachusetts, Missouri, Nebraska, Nevada, New Mexico, New York, Ohio, Pennsylvania, Tennessee, Texas, Utah and Washington State.

*How are FEMA US&R teams different from other search and rescue teams?*

FEMA teams organize existing search and rescue capability into a national program that can quickly deploy to an event. They have additional training, and must be able to deploy within six hours and to sustain themselves for 72 hours. They must also have a roster that fills 31 different positions with at least two people for each position. To receive the FEMA certification, the team must be approved by a US&R oversight board that includes leaders in the field and FEMA officials. One of the difficulties in obtaining the certification is being able to staff a complete roster of at least 62 trained individuals.

*What kind of positions make up the 31 in each team?*

First, all team members are trained and certified emergency medical technicians. Then positions fall into roughly four categories: search and rescue; medical; technical and logistics. The search and rescue positions include engineers with expertise in shoring up, bracing, evaluating, breaching and lifting structural components, rescue specialists, and search specialists who use trained and credentialed search dogs, cameras and listening devices. The medical positions include physicians, EMTs, nurses and others who can set up and staff a mobile field hospital. Technical positions include hazard materials specialists and communications specialists, among others.

*What are the first steps the teams take when they arrive at a site?*

The FEMA US&R team meets with the field incident commander—the local firefighter or emergency specialist who is in charge of the site. After a general situation update and briefing, some team members set up a base of operations at the site, including tents, equipment and a stage area. Meanwhile, search and rescue specialists and structural engineers inspect the site. They look for major problem areas, likely areas to search, the condition of the collapse and hazardous materials. Also at this time, logistics team members are contacting local vendors to obtain heavy equipment, shoring materials, food, portable toilets and other supplies.

*Then what happens?*

The search and rescue specialists begin to gently and carefully move into the structure into areas that are not in imminent danger of collapse to get a better idea of the damage. They will have looked at blueprints of the building to understand its layout and will mark areas that need bracing and areas where victims can be seen. During this preliminary search, if any victim is found alive, the survey halts and stabilization efforts are concentrated there to get the victim out. After this preliminary search, the detailed search begins with dogs, cameras and listening devices. Medical services are given to any victims who are found alive, so they are treated while they are being extricated.

*What comes next?*

Major shoring up is the priority at this point, as additional search is not possible until the site is safe. Shoring up will take place, often, in many different places on the site and searches will be conducted simultaneously. As more and deeper parts of the structure are shored up, the searchers are able to penetrate deeper into the collapsed structure and are not seen from the outside. The search continues as long as it's possible that victims remain alive.

*What makes the task so difficult?*

Essentially the teams have to “de-layer” the site. Layers of slabs “pancake” on top of each other during a collapse. Within each layer are potential safe areas for victims. But the site has to be dug out from the top to the bottom and from the outside to the inside or the pile will collapse further, threatening rescue workers and potentially killing buried, but alive victims.

*Is that why rescuers don't dig from underneath the structure to reach people?*

Yes, to do so is impossible without injuring or killing rescuers.

*Why do rescuers use “bucket brigades” to remove the debris rather than heavy equipment, such as bulldozers or cranes?*

Heavy equipment can't get close enough to the core of the site. The equipment is blocked by twisted steel and slabs, at a minimum. Plus using heavy equipment would destabilize the structure, risking the lives of rescuers and victims buried in the rubble. Only by hand can the pulverized concrete, glass, furniture and other debris be removed. In a large site, such as the World Trade Center, the bucket brigade has to span a long way across potentially unstable parts of the structure to firm ground that can handle large trucks to haul it away. The site itself spans four square city blocks and seven different collapsed buildings.

*In the World Trade Center, for example, what amount of debris are we talking about?*

In the first five days after the collapse of the towers, 30,000 tons of debris had been removed by hand; there are 600,000 tons left.

*Do bulldozers or cranes ever help?*

Yes, when it is determined that the rescue effort is over and that no one remains alive in the structure, large equipment can be moved in to remove debris.

*Since water is necessary to keep trapped victims alive until they are rescued, why don't rescuers shower the site with water in the hopes it will reach them?*

Water creates significant problems for rescuers, slowing down the rescue process and potentially destabilizing the site because of run-off.

*How often are the US&R teams rotated?*

The teams work 12 hours on and 12 hours off. They may rotate members within the team—remember each position has at least two members—or they may rotate complete teams. Typically, no team stays on site for more than seven days before being rotated out.

*Since there are so many teams, why are there only eight at the World Trade Center and four at the Pentagon?*

It has to do with space limitations at the site. You can only have so many workers "attacking" the structure at one time before it becomes too dangerous. Also, the FEMA US&R teams augment the skilled and determined local rescuers as well, so there are sufficient numbers of rescuers at any time.

*What kind of risks do the US&R teams face?*

Of greatest concern, of course, is being crushed by a structural collapse. Rescuers also get cuts and scrapes, broken bones, respiratory injuries due to hazardous material/fumes, dust and carbon monoxide, and burns. They are also susceptible to diseases such as diphtheria, tetanus and pneumonia.

*How are the teams paid?*

When they are activated by FEMA, they are paid by FEMA. Otherwise, they work their regular jobs.

*Who funds their equipment?*

FEMA funds the equipment. Each team has about \$1.7 million worth of equipment, and team member may each carry as much as 60 pounds of equipment and protective clothing on their body.

*How long will they stay at a site?*

Until it is determined that no victims could possibly be alive. In Oklahoma City, the teams stayed for 15 days.

*Does FEMA hire members of the US&R team and how can I apply?*

FEMA does not hire team members; FEMA credentials teams that meet the stringent criteria and are approved by the US&R oversight board. The training is extensive and the commitment required is significant.

Senator MIKULSKI. Chief, thank you very much for that outstanding contribution. I feel like I have just listened to the Schwarzkopf of the firefighting community.

I am ready to organize and mobilize. Your testimony was outstanding, along with Assistant Chief Morris. I can understand why Senator Bond is so proud of you and the work you do. We are delighted you are part of the panel.

Mr. PAULSELL. Thank you very much. It is an honor to be here.

Senator MIKULSKI. We will come back to you because you have given us a good blueprint.

Firefighter Olaguer.

We would like to hear from you now. But, before we do, I want to acknowledge the presence of another outstanding colleague, Senator Larry Craig of Idaho, who comes really from the perspective of a rural population from very rugged terrain that also faces, in addition to these new threats we are talking about, the whole issues around firefighting and forest fires.

So, there has to also be regional sensitivity. As Assistant Chief Morris mentioned, for those of us who are in the Capital Region, there is one kind of threat. Missouri, with its very strategic location and knowing the flooding and issues and so on, is another. Then you have the west that faces other types of firefighting challenges. Yet, we are going to call upon them, as you said, to back up where others need to be deployed.

So, Senator Craig, we are just delighted that you are here.

Why do you not go ahead?

**STATEMENT OF CARLOS OLAGUER, FIREFIGHTER, BALTIMORE CITY  
FIRE DEPARTMENT**

Mr. OLAGUER. Thank you. Did you have an opportunity to get this picture here?

Senator MIKULSKI. Yes.

Mr. OLAGUER. Okay, thank you. It is a representation of what I am talking about.

Senator MIKULSKI. You went down in the tunnel. Right?

Mr. OLAGUER. Physically I did not go in the manhole, no. I dealt with the north end of the tunnel on the third alarm response. My unit did. And also once the trains were pulled out, we were extinguishing the product and having to remove the product on there.

Senator MIKULSKI. You tell us your story and what you think you need to.

Mr. OLAGUER. The story is quite compelling.

Madam Chair, members present, and guests, my name is Carlos Olaguer, and I am a Baltimore City firefighter.

On July 18th of last year, Baltimore City firefighters responded to a train fire inside the Howard Street Tunnel, a tunnel built in 1895, 1.7 miles long and directly beneath the heart of the city. My unit, truck company 26, located in the northeast part of the city, responded on the third alarm to the north entrance of the tunnel at Mt. Royal Avenue.

Surrounding the north entrance are historic buildings and cultural centers which are a part of many great cities.

Truck 26 was initially dispatched for additional manpower and rapid intervention and had several minutes to reach the staging area and prepare for the task at hand. First due fire companies, anticipating diesel smoke from the train's engine, had no idea of the magnitude of the fire. The amount of smoke emanating from the north end of the tunnel was so thick and toxic that citizens above the tunnel had to be tended to and cleared from the area.

The next morning, engine 27, also stationed with truck 26, staged near the south entrance of the tunnel near Camden Yards. The south end of the tunnel is, once again, 1.7 miles from the north entrance and almost 5 miles from our own station engine 27 and truck 26.

Prior to the tunnel fire, seven fire companies were closed in Baltimore City. Six of these seven were closer to the tunnel fire than engine 27 and truck 26.

Engine 27 was to advance hose lines into the south end and attack the fire from within. The pump operator, stationed above ground in his wagon, was responsible for maintaining water flow to the firefighters down below. He would position himself near the opening of the tunnel to try to maintain radio contact, then retreat to the engine to make any adjustments needed. He would then return to his listening position. Although many attempts were made, engine company 27 was unable to reach the train from the south entrance.

Engine 27 was later repositioned to a manhole opening directly above the still burning train. Through this opening, firefighters came in direct contact with the burning train. Each firefighter entering the hole was now being exposed to direct heat and smoke and whatever chemicals were spewing from the train. Please keep in mind that the train had been burning for more than 24 hours at this point.

On the fifth day of the tunnel fire, boxcars were finally removed from the tunnel and pulled to a remote location near Fort

McHenry. Truck 26 was again dispatched along with aerial tower 102 and engine company 14. The task at hand was to forcibly enter the boxcars and extinguish all contents. The process began on the day shift and my shift relieved on the scene at 1700 hours, or 5:00 p.m. We were subsequently relieved at 3:00 a.m. and returned to our own station.

It is important to note that similar operations were being done at the north end of the tunnel. Trains were taken out of the south and also on the north end.

Madam Chair, the events I described placed the citizens and firefighters of Baltimore City in great peril. The horrific events of September 11 brought new awareness and respect to our Nation's firefighters. 9/11 forever changed this country. For firefighters, we will never forget the heroism of the New York brothers and sisters and the ultimate sacrifice made by 343 dedicated firefighters who died saving tens of thousands of lives.

However, it would be a mistake for this committee or anyone else to frame the needs of the fire service by the events of 9/11. Across the country in communities large and small, firefighters and paramedics answer the call every day. Whether it is a train derailment in Baltimore, a raging forest fire in the west, or a vacant warehouse in Worcester, Massachusetts, we respond. We serve and in all too many cases we die.

The sad irony is that in spite of our sacrifice and dedication, we are simply not provided with the resources and equipment to do our job safely and effectively. As municipal and county budgets tighten, the fire service becomes the unfortunate target of cuts. Our industry is hemorrhaging and we need your assistance now.

I can only speak to the needs of our Maryland firefighters. Across the board in every category in which FIRE Act money can provide revenue, there are deficiencies. In training, equipment, apparatus, communications, safety and health issues, and staffing, we come up short.

Training budgets have been slashed to put more firefighters on the street. As a result, we are not receiving adequate training. The long-term impact will create a firefighting force that is ill-equipped to handle emergencies such as the train derailment or a future terrorist attack. More disturbingly, it will impact our ability to handle more everyday responses such as a normal dwelling fire. Like the military, training and preparation are key ingredients to a successful operation.

An often forgotten-about component of response capabilities is communications. The Baltimore train derailment provides an example of the inadequacies of our communications system. Very candidly, firefighters operating inside of the tunnel were completely out of radio communications with the outside units and command center except when you got down near the tunnel, if you will. Essentially we were on our own. If you will take a look at the pictures provided, you must visualize being a half a mile inside a tunnel with heavy fire, confirmed hazardous and explosive chemicals, and smoke so thick that you could not see your hand in front of your face and knowing that no one knows where you are or even if you are alive or dead.

The situation is not unique to this scenario. In many high-rise and older buildings, we have several sub-basements. I traveled in one here in Washington this morning. In the hulls of container ships, and in large industrial complexes, the radios do not always work. Our safety and the efficiency of the operation are compromised.

Like many other Americans, I have watched recent news accounts stating that firefighters operating inside the twin towers were out of radio communications with command. I also recall an article last spring prior to 9/11 detailing problems with the radio system in New York. I cannot help wonder what if there was a problem that could have been fixed. Would 343 of my brothers have died?

Another major problem with respect to firefighter safety is the lack of personal protective clothing and equipment. As I stated earlier, I drive a ladder truck and function as a firefighter. I am not a chief officer or a budget person, so I do not know exactly how the money is gotten or where it goes. I do know that firefighters need to perform their jobs safely.

Once again, I will use the train derailment as an example.

Firefighters work in flame retardant clothing called turnout or bunker gear. These garments protect us against extreme heat and adverse conditions under which we work. In normal fires, they get completely soaked by water and become very heavy and cumbersome, weighing over 40 pounds. While inconvenient, this is part of the job.

However, in incidents like the train derailment, firefighters are on the scene for days at a time. We have only one set of gear. By industry standards our gear should be decontaminated after exposure to hazardous chemicals. It is not. Firefighters who entered the tunnel and whose gear was exposed to PCB's, ammonium, and other carcinogens were forced to work in the same gear for days on end. Having a second set of gear would dramatically lessen possible long-term health hazards and possibly add to a longer life, if you will.

At least in the Baltimore department, we have adequate self-contained breathing apparatus and pass devices to locate trapped members. Some departments do not. Technology exists through thermal imaging to locate and monitor firefighters operating inside any structure. If all departments had this technology, both firefighter and civilian deaths would be reduced dramatically.

At the end of the day, the most important resource for fire departments is manpower. It takes firefighters willing and ready to go into a burning building to put out the fire and save lives. Madam Chair, in Baltimore we simply do not have enough firefighters to do the job. Consider this. When you served in the city council in the early 1970's, Baltimore had 11 firefighting battalions, 55 engine companies, 30 truck companies, 2 hose wagons, 2 chemicals units, and 4 fire boats. Today the same city has 6 battalions, 33 engine companies, 19 truck companies, 1 HAZMAT unit and 2 fire boats.

When I came into the department in 1974, the hose wagons were gone, a chemical unit was disbanded, several engine companies had

been closed, and Baltimore's Inner Harbor renewal project was being compromised by the dismantling of the Marine Division.

A more contemporary and compelling statistic is that since 1990 our suppression force, in terms of engines and trucks in service, has been cut by 26 percent. In that same period, our call volume has soared from almost 70,000 responses to 116,392 responses. That is a 47 percent increase in responses. We do not have enough firefighters to do the job.

Years ago, our fire department could handle multiple incidents at the same time and still have adequate resources to respond to other calls. Sadly today that is not the case. Two small fires occurring at the same time completely deplete our resources. Firehouse closings have created a situation that extends response time and threatens people's lives.

To put the citizens' minds at ease, the city has instituted an interesting program called rotated closures. Essentially each day one firehouse is shut down and firefighters are dispersed throughout the city to man other companies. It is designed to save on overtime costs. However, the community is left unprotected. Since the residents still see a fire truck, they believe they are being protected. It is a sham.

This occurs for one reason: lack of resources. And I am not here to debate whether firefighting expenses are a local, State, or Federal responsibility. I am here as a front-line firefighter and a tax-paying citizen who believes that protecting our citizens is government's responsibility.

Across the country, fire departments need money to hire additional personnel. It is our most critical need.

Madam Chair and members of the committee, you can address our issues. I ask you to fully fund the FIRE Act. Give America's firefighters the full \$900 million that has been authorized and allocate half of that money to a staffing program. America's first responders need your assistance.

#### PREPARED STATEMENT

The events of 9/11 have brought the needs of the fire service to the forefront. The greatest tribute that could be paid to our 343 lost New York brothers and Eric Shafer, the last Baltimore firefighter to die in the line of duty, is for Congress to provide the resources to allow America's firefighters to do our job safely and effectively.

Thank you very much, and I will be available for questions.

[The statement follows:]

#### PREPARED STATEMENT OF CARLOS OLAGUER

Madam Chair, members present, and guests.

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Training budgets have been slashed to put more fire fighters on the street. As a result, we are not receiving adequate training. The long-term impact will create a fire fighting force that is ill equipped to handle emergencies such as the train derailment or a future terrorist attack. More disturbingly, it will impact our ability to handle more everyday responses such as a normal dwelling fire. Like the military, training and preparation are key ingredients to a successful operation.

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trial complexes, the radios do not always work. Our safety and the efficiency of the operation are compromised.

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In normal fires, they get completely soaked by water and become very heavy and cumbersome, weighing over forty pounds. While inconvenient, this is part of the job. However, in incidents like the train derailment, fire fighters are on the scene for days at a time. We have only one set of gear. By industry standards, our gear should be decontaminated after exposure to hazardous chemicals. It isn't. Fire fighters who entered the tunnel and whose gear was exposed to PCBs, ammonium, and other carcinogens were forced to work in the same gear for days on end. Having a second set of gear would dramatically lessen possible long-term health hazards.

At least in the Baltimore department, we have adequate self-contained breathing apparatus and pass devices to locate trapped members. Some departments do not. However, technology exists through thermal imaging to locate and monitor fire fighters operating inside any structure. If all departments had this technology both fire fighter and civilian deaths would be reduced dramatically.

At the end of the day, the most important resource fire departments have is manpower. It takes fire fighters willing and ready to go into a burning building to put out the fire and save lives. Madam Chair, in Baltimore we simply do not have enough fire fighters to do the job. Consider this, when you served in the city council in the early 1970s, Baltimore had eleven fire fighting battalions with 55 engine companies, 30 truck companies with two hose wagons, two chemical units and four fire boats. Today, the same city has only 6 battalions with 33 engine companies, 19 truck companies, one HAZMAT unit and two fireboats.

When I came into the department in 1974 the hose wagons were gone a chemical unit was disbanded, several engine companies had been closed and Baltimore's Inner Harbor Renewal Project was being compromised by the dismantling of the Marine Division

A more contemporary and compelling statistic is that since 1990 our suppression force, in terms of engines and trucks in service, has been cut by 26 percent. In the same period, our call volume has soared from 69,665 responses to 116,392, a 47 percent increase. We don't have enough fire fighters to do the job.

Years ago, our fire department could handle multiple incidents at the same time and still have adequate resources to respond to other calls. Sadly, today, that isn't the case. Two small fires occurring at the same time completely deplete our resources. Fire house closings have created a situation that extends response time and threatens people's lives.

To put the citizens' minds at ease, the city has instituted an interesting program called "rotating closures." Essentially, each day one firehouse is shut down and the fire fighters are dispersed throughout the city to other companies. This is designed to save on overtime costs. However, a community is left unprotected. Since the residents still see a fire truck, they believe that they are protected. It's a sham.

This occurs for one reason: lack of resources. I am not here to debate whether fire-fighting expenses are a local, State or Federal responsibility. I am here as a front-line firefighter and a taxpaying citizen who believes that protecting our citizens is government's responsibility.

Across the country, fire departments need money to hire additional personnel. It is our most critical need.

Madam Chair and members of the committee, you can help address our issues. I ask you to fully fund the FIRE Act. Give America's fire fighters the full 900 million that has been authorized and allocated half of that money to a staffing program. America's first responders need your assistance.

The events of 9/11 have brought the needs of the fire service to the forefront. The greatest tribute that could be paid to our 343 lost FDNY brothers and Eric Schafer, the last Baltimore fire fighter to die in the line of duty, is for Congress to provide the resources to allow, America's fire fighters to do our job safely and effectively.

Thank you and I'll be happy to answer any questions.

## URBAN SEARCH AND RESCUE

Senator MIKULSKI. Thank you very much, Mr. Olaguer.

I am going to ask a few questions and then turn to my colleagues and then move to the next panel.

First of all, that was outstanding testimony. I would like to thank each and every one of you. It was exactly the kind of testimony that the committee wanted to hear, kind of what are the basics that we need to do. I know that as each and every one of you are at this table, you are representing thousands who are depending on you to articulate these issues. And we will be hearing from the leadership of the professional associations and the firefighters union.

Mr. Paulsell, I would like to just ask a question of you in terms of the urban search and rescue issues and then go to you, Assistant Chief Morris, and then move with my colleagues. I want to be sure they have a chance.

We have these 28 FEMA units. Chief, you outlined what you needed from FEMA. Chief Morris, when I went to the Pentagon and you were there, is Chevy Chase not one of the 28?

Mr. MORRIS. No, Senator. Montgomery County is home to one of the 28 teams. The rescue squad is not part of that unit.

Senator MIKULSKI. Could you reiterate, in terms of a must-do list, what we need to do to really be able to strengthen these 28 units? You referred to them as the special forces of the firefighting community. And then I want to go back to the firefighters. What do you think specifically, if you had three things that you felt that by the time we finished our appropriations in October, we actually had money in the Federal checkbook, not wish lists or dream teams, are the three things we could do to maximize your potential?

As I understand your testimony, there might be a desire in Congress to say, well, if we have got 28, let us double it. That is the way Congress talks when they want to show they want to do something. Let us double and go to 56. You have a different point here.

And also, what do you need from FEMA for urban search and rescue? Then we are going to go to the firefighter grant program.

Mr. PAULSELL. Good question.

The first thing we need to do is complete the equipment caches, the basic urban search and rescue equipment cache for each one of those task forces so that when they go out the door, they go out the door with all the equipment that they need to effect search and rescue safely and thoroughly.

Senator MIKULSKI. Working with the task force, what do you think that is?

Mr. PAULSELL. I think to completely fill out the equipment caches for these task forces, we are talking around \$1 million.

Senator BOND. Each?

Mr. PAULSELL. No, in total.

Senator MIKULSKI. \$1 million?

Mr. PAULSELL. That will complete the equipment caches.

Senator MIKULSKI. But that is not your equipment. That is what you have stored. What do you mean by equipment caches?

Mr. PAULSELL. Each task force goes out the door with about \$1.8 million worth of equipment. The equipment cache is predetermined by FEMA.

I am sorry. I misquoted. It is \$10 million. I am looking at my notes here.

Senator MIKULSKI. You caused a collective gasp here.

Senator BOND. Chief, you cannot come before an appropriations committee and only ask for \$1 million.

Mr. PAULSELL. Is \$10 million better? I'm sorry.

Senator MIKULSKI. My little lungs gasped. That is why I am coughing.

Senator CRAIG. He has just learned his lesson.

Mr. PAULSELL. I will never, ever do that again, Senator. I promise.

Mr. PAULSELL. \$10 million to fill out the existing equipment caches so that they have all the equipment they are prescribed to have.

The second thing we need to do is provide annual grant funding in excess of \$150,000 a year to keep that equipment cache current, keep the training up, and we are talking about around \$1 million per year per task force. That would be an annual recurring fund.

The third thing we need to do is equip all of these task forces immediately so that they can operate in an environment of weapons of mass destruction. If, as an example, a dirty bomb was detonated in Kansas City, Missouri, we would be called upon to effect search and rescue operations. We do not have the chemical and biological protection necessary to do that safely and protect our people.

Senator MIKULSKI. Is that both training and equipment?

Mr. PAULSELL. Training and equipment, right.

What we would like to see from FEMA is a program priority set within FEMA so that they have sufficient staff and they have sufficient agency focus to be responsive to this program so that we do not get caught up in what we all call bureaucracy and we can move along quickly. We have a number of systems in place where participants in this program freely give of their time to participate in working groups and committees to develop training standards and performance standards and so on, but we get caught up in, it seems like, tiers and tiers of approval within FEMA to get this out the door. And time, more now than ever, is of the essence and we need to move this program along and get the necessary support from the agency.

Senator MIKULSKI. Well, I want to come back to this tiers and tiers and layers and layers of bureaucracy. We do not want tiers and we do not want to shed tears. That is kind of our goal.

This is a touchy subject and I really turn to you and others on the panel. The way FEMA is set up is to work through Governors, which is fine because we are talking about the response. FEMA was originally set up to respond to natural disasters in which a Governor had to declare an emergency and FEMA would come in with money. It would not come in to fund people directly, except the hazards people, the FEMA people, the emergency management people.

Here this is local control. These are local firehouses. This is done through States not only the rescue. These are cities. These are communities. These are independent. If you are a volunteer fire department, you are an independent unit. Am I right, Assistant Chief Morris?

Mr. MORRIS. Well, we in Montgomery County operate in a system where it is a series of 19 fire rescue departments that are providing service to Montgomery County. Like I said earlier, Montgomery County is home to one of these FEMA teams.

As an incident commander in the field, I have many of these resources from that team at my disposal if I want them. So, an investment in those FEMA teams is also an investment in the resources available to the local community.

Senator MIKULSKI. Yes, but now I want to switch to the Fire Grant program and then turn to my colleagues.

I believe in local control, local decision making, and not trickle-down money to you. I am afraid it will get all caught up in a lot of bureaucracy, that the coordinators who do not communicate any better than your radio equipment works for you, that the money just gets all tied up in bureaucracy and sign-offs, one page at a time.

So, my question would be, number one, do you believe the money should come directly to the urban search and rescue teams and come directly, in the Fire Grant program to local departments? Or do you believe it should go through the State and then be allocated and then you apply there?

Mr. MORRIS. Senator, I would advocate it going to the local departments directly. One of the things I was impressed with about the Fire Grant program was the process for applying seemed to be simplified so that many local departments could not only submit a grant proposal, but then there was a peer review process that we felt streamlined the operation and made it very easy and in very short order for that money to be awarded. We support the peer review process and a continuation of the program. The fewer steps you take out of it, the faster it is going to reach the citizens.

I will just give you one example. Montgomery County is still trying to make purchases from a Justice Department grant that is 3 years old, and it has just been mired in red tape.

Senator MIKULSKI. Well, we want to hear more about that.

One last question. When those radios failed, what was the means of communication with our firefighters? What would be the single most important thing we should direct FEMA to focus on in terms of protection for the local firefighter?

Mr. OLAGUER. As far as communication was concerned—

Senator MIKULSKI. We watched you. All of Baltimore and I think all of America was pulling for you. But pulling for you is one thing, but you being out in PCB-saturated clothes every day deserves a lot better attention here.

Mr. OLAGUER. I would think so.

Standard communication was difficult between the guys above ground trying to monitor their people under the ground. What looked like a good time for everybody—and the TV cameras were up and the public information officer was saying we have everything under control—was above ground. Underground, the best ex-

ample I can give is we had one individual who was lost in the tunnel. We did not know if he had one person, four people, five. We had no idea where he was. He was in the north end of the tunnel. Baltimore County units were dispatched and a cave-in unit was dispatched. Other units just showed up who were monitoring our radio and happened to show up at the scene, and then confusion, of course, ensued because there was no command structure organized with the other jurisdictions. It really was a tense and strained situation at one time.

The next thing we know, here came a car full of the people we thought were trapped. Of course, they were overcome and had to be tended to by medic units, but no one knew where he was, how he was, what was going on because we could not hear what he was saying and they could not hear what command was saying up top.

And that was an incident that was featured in the morning paper the next day with—I do not have a picture here. But I am saying that was the feature that morning in the morning paper, was this group that went in. No one had contact with him.

You literally need technology and advances in setting up communication relay systems, antennas in particular buildings and tunnels and areas like that. That is just one small improvement just on the communication side.

Senator MIKULSKI. Thank you very much.

Senator Bond, why do I not turn to you and then Senator Craig?

#### TASK FORCES

Senator BOND. Thank you, Madam Chair.

To follow up with firefighter Olaguer's comments about the need for better communications equipment, I asked a rather simple question yesterday of acting FEMA Regional Administrator Paccino in New York City, and I said why did you not have a structural engineer or a specialist who could advise and warn the command staff and the firefighters about the danger of collapse. And the chilling response was, we did. We could not communicate it. And to me that was one of the most chilling things I learned. Madam Chair, obviously communications and command structure are very important.

Let me turn back to Chief Paulsell. It appears that the Chair has seen the set-up questions that the Chief gave me to ask.

Senator BOND. But I will follow up with some of the ones that you did not ask, Madam Chair.

Is there a need for the task forces perhaps to deploy overseas? What would need to happen and what is the need there?

Mr. PAULSELL. Well, presently out of the 28, there are 2 of the existing task forces that have a prearranged agreement with the Office of Foreign Disaster Assistance to the Secretary of State's Department. Our concern there is that as we tighten up our borders here in the United States, we have vulnerability overseas in our assets there, as do our allies. And we have seen some deployments to some terrorist attacks at some of our embassies and Marine barracks and those sorts of facilities in the past.

We would like to see our Government move forward to facilitate a broader response from these task forces, particularly in light of the fact that we have a number of them on the west coast that can

deploy much quicker going to the west. That involves some additional logistical support and supplies to support us overseas, passports, immunizations, that sort of thing, and just some prior planning and some funding. And I quite frankly do not have those numbers here today.

Senator BOND. Senator Mikulski raised a question and I was not clear about your answer. Is there a need for additional task forces in the system?

Mr. PAULSELL. We believe that the task forces that presently are in place are probably underutilized. In a way that is fortunate because that speaks to the number of disasters that we respond to. But on the other hand, that makes it difficult for us to maintain skills and currency and that sort of thing. So, those task forces within the system do not see a need to expand. If there was an identified need through some sort of threat assessment, quite frankly by doubling the equipment cache in the existing task forces, you could double your capacity without adding extra training and personnel.

We have to maintain a current roster staff of 186 to ensure that we are three deep in each one of the 62 positions to ensure around-the-clock availability. Once that initial wave of 62 go out the door, within 24 hours every one of these task forces could field another team of 62 if we had the equipment to go.

Senator BOND. So, in other words, you have the personnel. You have essentially three full task forces, but you only have equipment for one.

Mr. PAULSELL. For one.

Senator BOND. And if there is a need for additional teams to be in the field, it would seem that the simplest thing is to provide double equipment so that at least two teams of each task force could go out, obviously keeping one back.

Mr. PAULSELL. That is correct.

Senator BOND. But you train all 186. Just with an additional level of equipment, you can maintain it.

Mr. PAULSELL. That is right.

#### URBAN SEARCH AND RESCUE

Senator BOND. What other areas in FEMA's urban search and rescue response system need attention?

Mr. PAULSELL. Well, I think we have touched on most. I think there is probably a need to address transportation assets. Presently most of us have to rely on renting trucks and buses to get out the door to get to our point of departure at a military air base. We are concerned about our ability to do that. We could be out the door quicker if we had the funding levels to support a ground transportation system.

Secondarily, we are a little bit concerned also, as we continue the war on terrorism, about the availability of military airlift resources. Our planes are going to be busier in the military and may not be readily available to get us across the country. If we had ground assets preloaded, ready to go that were dependable and not dependent on using excess or surplus property equipment that we get through the Federal excess program, that costs a lot of money

to maintain and is not very dependable, we could be on the road and moving quicker than we are.

#### UTILIZATION OF ASSETS

Senator BOND. It seems to me that this is an area where Governor Ridge can perhaps bring some more coordination and resources. We are blessed in Missouri with a lot of C-130's. Maybe we will even get some C-17's at some time. I know the C-130's came and picked you up at Whiteman. But when we are combining the homeland defense, it would seem reasonable.

But let me ask you. We have some technical capabilities at Fort Leonard Wood, Missouri, chem/biological response. We have National Guard. How do you see the broader scheme that we could utilize the resources we have from the Doctrine and Training Command in Fort Leonard Wood, the National Guard, and the urban search and rescue task forces? Is there not potential for a much more effective utilization of all these assets together?

Mr. PAULSELL. Certainly. There are some concerns that I have kind of beyond the realm of the task force program. The military has put forth a great deal of emphasis on weapons of mass destruction research, training, and capability. Through the National Guard program, they have established civil support teams across the country to respond to domestic acts of terrorism involving chemical and biological warfare. I really have some questions and some doubts as to the effectiveness of those teams long term and, quite frankly, right now their availability because we are at war and military assets are primarily used in that regard as well.

My fellow panelists here this morning spoke about the challenges faced at the first responder level. If those resources and those capabilities are available within the military structure, then clearly they need to be made available to the first responders of this country in terms of training and research and assistance and support and not kept purely within the military establishment. The chemical weapons school at Fort Leonard Wood, Missouri is an incredible and developing resource that should be made available to firefighters, not only task forces but firefighters across this country. What comes of that and what is learned in that process needs to be shared and it cannot only exist on a military base. There has to be a disbursal program that can be taken to the Senator's State out west and not rely necessarily on him transporting all these firefighters to a military installation.

I think there is a marriage there and the National Fire Academy is a good model of that of how they have done a hand-off package. But I think we need to get these people married up, the military establishment and the intelligence establishment and the people on the front line of this war that we are facing, and get that information and that material and that training and capability to the local level and get it to the street quickly.

Senator BOND. Madam Chair, if I just may make one additional point we had talked about earlier. Training, the protective equipment, chemical or biological or nuclear, but when there is an incident involving one of those, detailing the military specialists to join, if they are specialists in chem attack or specialists in biological or specialists in radioactive management, would seem to me to



be helpful, if they were available from the military, to assist in a command and advice structure to a USAR task force.

Senator MIKULSKI. I think that is very interesting. We are going to be having Joe Allbaugh, apart from the overall FEMA budget, just on this topic and the FEMA role in homeland security, as well as all the other things FEMA has to talk about. An excellent point.

Are you done, Senator?

Senator BOND. Yes, thank you.

Senator MIKULSKI. Senator Craig.

Senator CRAIG. Madam Chairman, first of all, let me thank you for this hearing and let me ask unanimous consent that my opening statement be a part of the record.

Senator MIKULSKI. Absolutely, without objection.

[The statement follows:]

#### PREPARED STATEMENT OF SENATOR LARRY CRAIG

Madam Chairman and Senator Bond, thank you for holding this very important hearing on issues that affect our nation's fire fighters.

These brave men and women put their lives on the line to serve and protect their communities—not only on September 11, but every day. Time after time, they are the first on the scene to respond to an emergency.

Now today, in the fight against terrorism, we are again turning to fire fighters as the first line in our homeland defense. And while we owe them a debt of gratitude that we could never repay for taking on this difficult and dangerous job, gratitude is not enough. It is critical to their safety, as well as the safety of the communities they protect, for them to have access to adequate resources in the way of equipment, training, and personnel.

I have spent a lot of time talking to the fire fighters in my state of Idaho, both the volunteer and career forces. While I understand the terrible threat that terrorism poses in an urban setting—I visited both ground zero in New York City and the Pentagon—I hope my colleagues will keep in mind that the largely rural, public lands states of the West, like mine, present special challenges in fire fighting that equally deserve Congressional attention.

Let me thank the witnesses who have agreed to share their expertise with us today. I look forward to hearing your testimony and your suggestions as to how we might better support the fire fighters across our country.

#### NATIONAL INTERAGENCY FIRE CENTER

Senator CRAIG. Let me make a couple of observations because time is an issue with me here, and I apologize.

We have the privilege in Boise, Idaho of hosting the National Interagency Fire Center which is a cache deployment facility both for equipment and personnel for fires within the Forest Service, BLM, Park Service, Bureau of Rec, Madam Chairman, you name it. It also deploys caches of equipment and material to FEMA at times of national emergency.

Madam Chairman, I heard the Chief mention this, talking about relationships of resources and bringing them together. I think we need to be very cautious about recreating anything. The FEMA model and these task forces that have been mentioned here today are a model that we looked at 2 years ago following the catastrophic fire events in the west of that summer, to see where we could find resources of knowledge and training to bring into the Federal firefighting system, both for the Forest Service and the BLM, because we ran woefully short of trained people to take crews into the fires and all of that and we ran short of equipment.

As you know, Senator Pete Domenici and I and others led that charge to get more money into that, echoing remnants of the Los Alamos issue and others, and we were successful in that.

What I found out during that time is there is phenomenal talent that is out there, but that it is segregated and oftentimes independent of others. And they do not communicate well, nor do they cross-train, nor do they share. And shame on us.

I think 9/11, hopefully, and the role of Tom Ridge and others and our response to it can begin to break down these barriers not only of information and training and sharing—I do not deny the argument of additional equipment and modern equipment and updates and adequate uniforms and all of that kind of thing. That clearly is necessary. But what I have found over the years in watching the Interagency Center in Boise, as its role adjusts and changes and spreads, it is not just a firefighting center anymore, it has ready caches on hand to immediately load on an aircraft and get to a hurricane upon a FEMA request. We have some excellent models if we will begin to share them and integrate them, along with the additional resources to make that happen and the complement of training. So, your hearing is very timely in that respect.

I am also pleased to hear the chief say we may not need any more of these top quality response task forces as much as we need the training and the material and the equipment, and as you mentioned, the ability with stashes of equipment to bring the second team out and the third team out of these trained folks. That makes a lot of sense to me based on the experience I have had in observing this.

We have also, both in the professional firefighter and the volunteer firefighter range, with the resources that we put together 2 years ago, additional training, a higher level of professionalism. It was clearly there with the professional full-time firefighter. The volunteers did their very best on even increasingly limited resources as you moved out to the smaller community to the county that was much more rural, and at the same time, we find all of a sudden cast into the role of having to participate or having to be the first responder in a chemical spill of magnitude, 75 to 100, even 300 miles away from an urban-based, broader-talented, oftentimes more resourced team. So, it is clear across the board that we really need to beef up in these areas.

I guess those are general observations that I would make and take no more of the committee's time.

On a personal note, Madam Chairman, I am going to not be able to be here for the next panel, but Mr. Harold Schaitberger, General President of the International Association of Firefighters. Who is this person out here? We have not met. This gentleman here. He and I have been at cross purposes for the last several months, not with my intent. That came as a result of a debate on the floor and a position paper that the Republican Policy Committee put out some months ago. As you know, we had that debate on the floor on a Daschle amendment some time ago.

Harold, I have a letter that I want to hand-deliver to you as I leave the room. But I also want to look you straight in the face and apologize that it was not my intent by a headline in a paper that was published to impugn the integrity of you or any of the high

quality professional firefighters of this Nation. Certainly that was not my intent.

The substance of the paper produced under the headline did not do that. It talked about the differences and policy and priority and relationships of State to Federal Government. But tragically enough, the headline did and could have been and you did interpret it to impugn the reputation of the people you represent. So, I wanted you to hear it first and foremost from me that that was not my intent and I apologize to you for that.

We are here united as a Congress, Democrat and Republican, to make sure that we amplify the role you play, the role that your people play, both professional and voluntary, and do so not just with words but with resources so that we can build even better first responder teams of men and women who put their lives on the line as the first people to the incident.

So, I wanted you to hear that from me because I am not going to be able to stay and listen to your testimony. I will read that testimony.

And I thank you very much, Madam Chairman, for getting this group before us today. We have a lot of work to do in this area. We do not have time to reinvent, but we certainly have time to break down the barriers and begin a greater cross reference of material and training that I think brings us together in a first responder homeland defense mode that clearly this country needs. Thank you.

Senator MIKULSKI. Thank you very much, Senator Craig.

We are really now going to have to turn to our panel because we have to adjourn no later than 1 o'clock. We want to thank everybody. Certainly what you had to offer has been excellent.

I know you want to say one more thing, but could you come around and say that to me while everybody comes up?

Mr. OLAGUER. Okay.

Senator MIKULSKI. Can we call up the leadership? I think this is a very good way to begin.

We want to welcome each and every one of you. First of all, the first panel was just excellent. I think they gave it to us from really a hands-on, on-the-ground perspective. But I know that each and every one of you represents the leadership of America's firefighting community. So, I want to turn to you now.

We have Mr. Harold Schaitberger, who is the President of the International Association of Firefighters; Mr. Philip Stittleburg, who chairs the National Volunteer Fire Council; and of course, Chief John Buckman, who is the head of the International Association of Fire Chiefs. We feel with you three, you really represent the core leadership of America's firefighting community and each from a different perspective, and we welcome that.

I would like to turn now to really a long-standing friend. Harold Schaitberger and I go back a very long time. When we started this firefighter caucus, I was in the House of Representatives, and for some time we have been concerned about those issues. Of course, after the horrific events of 9/11, we knew all that you were facing.

But rather than me talking, let us start with you, Mr. Schaitberger, and then just go right down. We are happy to take

your testimony. Please be candid tell it like it is. No holds barred. We want straight talk and fast action.

**STATEMENT OF HAROLD SCHAIBERGER, GENERAL PRESIDENT,  
INTERNATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF FIRE FIGHTERS**

Mr. SCHAIBERGER. Madam Chair, thank you very much. I really do appreciate the opportunity to appear before you and the members of this subcommittee on behalf of our Nation's career firefighters. As General President of our international union, I really have the privilege and honor of representing more than a quarter of a million professional firefighters and paramedics in this country of ours.

And it is no exaggeration. We have all watched and felt and have spoken in our own personal ways about the horrific acts of September 11. It has been said it has certainly changed this world of ours. It was an absolutely tragic day for our Nation. It was a catastrophic moment for thousands of innocent civilians, but I have to tell you that for our profession and my union, it was absolutely our darkest day. The 343 FDNY firefighters who made that ultimate sacrifice and worked, along with their colleagues, brothers and sisters, to try to save—and in fact, saved—tens of thousands of civilians from the hellish carnage of the World Trade Center were my members. The 343 families that they left behind, the 631 children are an extension of my union's family, and we will be continuing to deal with and supporting and handling those issues.

My focus today is also on the thousands of my members who made the immediate response to the terrorist attacks both in New York and at the Pentagon. For over 100 years, IAFF members have been protecting the citizens of our Nation from all hazards. They are the first on the scene when there are incidents involving fire, natural disasters, hazardous material incidents. They are our Nation's primary providers of emergency medical care. They are the ones who do search and rescue individuals that are trapped and in danger. They perform the high angle rescues that we hear about, the confined space rescues. They do water rescues. They are truly dedicated and skilled in so many ways. And now, in addition to these traditional responsibilities, they are also on the front lines in our war against terrorism that is being carried out on this country's soil.

If we are going to be successful in fulfilling both our traditional mission and our newest responsibility, we must have adequate resources. It really is that simple. Sadly, as we meet here today, we simply do not have adequate resources. We have a need for additional firefighters, more training, more equipment, and this cannot just be borne by our local communities any longer. The Federal Government must step up and must begin to shoulder this burden.

It was just over 1 year ago when Congress took the historic step of creating the Nation's first real program of direct assistance to local fire departments. And this, unfortunately, only after decades of our Federal Government not only recognizing, but providing hundreds of millions of dollars, rightfully so—the responsibility and fiscal responsibility that our Government recognizes—to support our Nation's law enforcement and education needs. Our Nation's fire service needs are no less important.

We are pleased to report to you that the FIRE Act was a success. The down side, very straightforward, very candid. Simply not nearly enough money. It was not enough funding to even begin to meet the needs expressed by our fire services throughout this country.

Madam Chair, we are well aware—and we congratulate you and the vital role you played and members of this great body in funding the FIRE Act at \$360 million for the current fiscal year. We appreciate the administration's new homeland security initiative, and I have had the pleasure of meeting and spending time with Governor Ridge and with Director Allbaugh to talk about the real needs.

But we are also concerned, as much as we applaud what we see in the budget initially and what we hear in the words about homeland security, as to whether these resources are really going to be able to meet where the tire meets the road, and that is down to the fire department for actual training and actual equipment for our Nation's first responders.

The FIRE Act and the President's proposal for homeland security in my view really should only be the beginning. We must undertake a comprehensive effort to ensure that every fire department in America has the personnel, training, and equipment that it needs to safely and efficiently and effectively protect our Nation's citizens.

Madam Chair, a vibrant, strong, and effective fire department response is built on three very straightforward foundations: an adequate number of firefighters on each piece of apparatus responding, proper training, and the right equipment. If you shortchange it and take just one away, you are going to allow the entire structure to potentially collapse.

The first and foremost need of the fire service is adequate personnel. All the training, all the sophisticated equipment is not really worth much if we are not going to have an adequate number of firefighters deployed at the scene to do the job. Across our Nation, two-thirds of all fire departments, large and small, are operating with inadequate staffing. In your own State, Madam Chair, the overwhelming majority of the fire departments operate with two and three firefighters assigned to a piece of apparatus. That is below the international consensus standard and OSHA regulations for safe fire ground operations issued by our own Department of Labor.

In earlier testimony, as we have heard from my brother Carlos Olaguer, the City of Baltimore is simply in a dire situation. But it does not stand alone. In nearly every other jurisdiction in Maryland, the problems are also evident. Prince George's, Howard, and other Maryland jurisdictions, counties that should be capable and should be able to provide sufficient personnel simply are not. These departments are riding with two and three firefighters, which I believe is dangerous to our people and which should be unacceptable to this Congress and to our Government and certainly below our national standard.

And in Missouri, Senator Bond, fire departments throughout the State, including the capital and St. Louis County do not meet the minimum staffing requirements in this country.

Congress would never allow our military to engage in a war with two-thirds of its divisions understaffed, but incredibly this is ex-

actly what we are asking our local fire departments to do. Whether it is through the FIRE Act or some new fire staffing initiatives, we ask this committee to provide the resources to ensure that every fire department in America has the minimum staffing it needs to respond to emergencies safely and efficiently. We encourage your committee to fully fund the FIRE Act at \$900 million and to dedicate \$450 million of that money towards staffing.

The second need of the fire service is training. Far too many jurisdictions lack the funds to hire training instructors, purchase training equipment, or have access to training facilities and are unable to provide new firefighters with even basic level training.

While basic firefighter training is needed by so many of our members, all firefighters I believe now need advanced training in HAZMAT and weapons of mass destruction response and mitigation. Terrorism, using weapons of mass destruction, is no longer a theory. We have experienced it, and it is now a constant threat to our Nation. September 11, Oklahoma City, and other terrorist acts have demonstrated that these madmen will employ appallingly unthinkable measures to achieve their goals.

In fact, just a few short weeks after September 11, our Nation experienced its first biological terrorism when anthrax was mailed, targeting leaders and members of this great body right here, in a building that is just next door, as well as our media. And during those frantic days in October, thousands of frightened Americans called their local fire departments to report suspicious white powder incidents, quickly overwhelming the capability of the few dedicated HAZMAT crews that we have. And as a result, it was front-line firefighters who responded to these calls, far too many of whom lacked any HAZMAT training. It is now clear that all firefighters need operations level hazardous materials and weapons of mass destruction response training.

The members of this committee can begin to address this training shortage by fully funding the FIRE Act.

Additionally, this committee has jurisdiction over two innovative HAZMAT programs. From the vantage point of front-line emergency responders, two components of HAZMAT that are doing the job now, that do the job and train our people in their own jurisdictions. And the advantage of that is self-evident because training for terrorism in your own community allows first responders to not only learn the tactics and methods of effective response, but also to apply these hypothetical concepts to concrete targets in their jurisdictions.

I am proud to note that the IAFF is also in partnership with EPA and NIEHS which offers training programs to fire departments throughout this Nation.

A third foundation, equipment. A lot has been said today about equipment, and I would simply say that of the 30,000 FIRE Act grant requests submitted last year, over 27,000 were for just three categories: personal protective gear, firefighting equipment, and vehicles. Less than 5 percent of those grant requests were awarded. And I had members who were part of the group that evaluated the requests, and they were appalled and it broke their heart to turn down requests to replace 15-year-old turnout gear, and they only

turned down those requests because there were departments that were even more dire in need.

As my organization has become more increasingly aware of weapons of mass destruction response, I am convinced that we really have a threat, and I do not believe the threat is necessarily by nuclear devices launched by foreign Nations nor necessarily by tactical nuclear weapons in a suitcase being walked around by cells, although, God forbid, those are threats that we have to be focused on. I believe the real threat is dirty bombs and we have heard the term "dirty bomb" mentioned. It is a very simple device with catastrophic results. You simply take a conventional explosive, ammonium nitrate and fuel oil like in Oklahoma City, dynamite, and then introduce radioactive material to it. You can have a catastrophic incident.

And our first responders, our Nation's firefighters who are the first that are expected to be on that scene, are not now properly trained to identify nor do they have the equipment to even attempt to determine whether it is a radioactive incident. And all the wonderful military ops and all the special operations are just terrific, but that is 4 hours, 5 hours, and how many more hours later while we have our people on the front line doing their job and they need the ability to do it correctly.

So, in conclusion, Madam Chair, let me just say that I would ask you and the distinguished Members of Senate, starting with this committee, to please fully fund the FIRE Act, to provide the resources directly to the fire departments, to ensure that these resources are not siphoned off by levels of government, but get to the departments where it is needed.

#### PREPARED STATEMENT

I see a lot of attention about prevention components, intelligent and prosecution components, and treatment components by all these threats. Every one starts with the possibility of an incident or an actual incident, and it is firefighters who will be there first. We need your help.

[The statement follows:]

#### PREPARED STATEMENT OF HAROLD A. SCHAIBERGER

Madam Chair, I appreciate the opportunity to appear before this subcommittee today on behalf of the Nation's professional fire fighters.

My name is Harold Schaitberger, and I am the General President of the International Association of Fire Fighters (IAFF). I started my career in 1966 as a fire fighter with the Fairfax County, Va., Fire and Rescue Department and I now have the honor of representing more than 245,000 professional fire fighters and paramedics who protect 80 percent of our Nation's population.

It is no exaggeration to say that September 11, 2001 completely changed the world. The 343 firefighters, who made the ultimate sacrifice that day and rescued tens of thousands of civilians from the hellish carnage of the World Trade Center tragedy, are my brothers, as are the thousands of fire fighters who responded to the terrorist attacks in New York and at the Pentagon.

While the horrific event brought public recognition and acclaim to our profession and membership, the mission of the fire service remains unchanged. Before and after September 11, America's Bravest are the country's first responders. Each and every day, they risk their lives protecting communities across our Nation.

Madam Chair, I come before this subcommittee as a man on a mission to build a living memorial to these fallen heroes. In tribute to them, and to provide for our common security, the IAFF is dedicated to improving homeland security, enhancing the safety of our Nation's fire fighters, and ensuring that our Nation's fire service

is prepared to respond to any and all challenges we may face in the future. The question isn't if another terrorist attack will occur, but when and where.

For nearly 100 years, IAFF members have been protecting the citizens of our Nation from all hazards. We are the first on the scene when there are incidents involving hazardous materials, we are the Nation's primary providers of emergency medical care, and we are the ones who search for and rescue people who are trapped and in danger.

And now, in addition to these traditional responsibilities, we are also at the frontlines in the war against terrorism. For firefighters, every day is September 11. Every time the alarm goes off, my members steel themselves to the possibility that they are responding to the latest act of terror. In the past, America's domestic warriors, our fire fighters, have had to respond to isolated incidents. In this new world, our fire and emergency medical services need to be prepared for a coordinated, well-orchestrated series of attacks on American citizens. In this first war of the 21st Century, the battle lines are drawn in our own communities and firefighters are, and will continue to be, our Nation's first line of defense.

If we are to be successful in fulfilling both our traditional mission and our newest responsibilities, we must have adequate resources. Sadly, as of today, we do not. The need for additional firefighters, training, and equipment is tremendous and it can no longer be borne solely by local jurisdictions. The Federal Government must help shoulder this burden.

#### EXISTING PROGRAMS

It was just over one year ago when Congress took the historic step of creating the Nation's first program of direct assistance to local fire departments. The FIRE Act was created in the closing days of the 106th Congress, and—in large measure thanks to your leadership—the program was funded at \$100 million.

We are pleased to report that the first year of the FIRE Act was an unqualified success. In 9 months, the United States Fire Administration—with help from the fire service—issued regulations, developed evaluations criteria, evaluated more than 30,000 requests for grants, and disbursed \$100 million in grants.

The only downside to last year's FIRE Act grant program was that there was simply not enough funding to meet the need. Fire departments submitted grant requests totaling close to \$3 billion. Clearly the \$100 million disbursed last year is only a small drop in the \$3 billion need bucket.

In recognition of this need, and in response to the events of September 11, funding for the FIRE Act was increased for the current fiscal year to a total of \$360 million. Madam Chair, we are well aware of the vital role you played in both the regular appropriations process and the supplemental appropriation to secure this funding. For that our Nations fire service, and my members are indebted to you.

We are mindful that even prior to September 11, and the heightened awareness of our profession, you took the lead in increasing FIRE Act funding. It was our honor to stand with you in a firehouse in Arbutus, Maryland the day before the attacks as you announced the Senate's first increase in funding.

We are also appreciative of President Bush's recent proposal to spend \$3.5 billion to train and equip the Nation's first responders. I had the opportunity to discuss the vital role fire fighters play in our Nation's Homeland Security with Governor Ridge late last year, and I have full confidence that he understands the importance of providing fire fighters with the tools they need to get the job done. We are eagerly looking forward to reviewing the details of this proposal, and look forward to working with Congress and the Administration on this important initiative.

But the FIRE Act and the President's Homeland Security proposal are only the beginning. We must undertake a comprehensive effort to ensure that every fire department in America has the personnel, training and equipment it needs to safely and effectively respond to emergencies that occur daily and the extraordinary calamities like acts of terrorism or floods, hurricanes and other natural disasters.

#### THE NEEDS

Madam Chair, a vibrant, strong, and effective fire department is built upon three foundations: (1) an adequate number of fire fighters (2) proper training and (3) the right equipment. Staffing, training, and equipment are the three pillars that support our Nation's fire departments. Shortchange or take one away and the whole structure collapses.

##### *Personnel*

The first and foremost need of the fire service is adequate personnel. Across our Nation, two thirds of all fire departments—large and small—operate with inad-



equate staffing. In order to come into compliance with accepted industry standards, the International Association of Fire Chiefs has estimated that 75,000 new fire fighters are needed.

In your own State, Madam Chair, virtually all fire departments are in need of additional staffing. The fire departments in Prince George's, Anne Arundel, Howard, and other counties respond with three or less fire fighters per apparatus.

In the City of Baltimore, the fire department claims to meet the minimum staffing of four fire fighters per apparatus. While this is technically true, Baltimore is able to achieve this only by closing fire stations and using gimmicks. Since 1990, runs by the city fire department have increased by 47 percent while the city has closed 15 fire stations marking a 26 percent reduction in coverage. Additionally, Baltimore employs the practice known as "rotating closures" where the city closes a station per day on a rotating basis and literally bets the lives of its citizens that a life-threatening emergency will not occur in the area protected by the closed station.

This fire fighter shortage is so dire that the Baltimore Fire Department cannot respond to more than one multi-alarm emergency at a time. And it is completely overwhelmed in major incidents like the tunnel train derailment that occurred in Baltimore's Inner Harbor last summer.

Throughout Missouri, the home of the distinguished Ranking Minority Member, fire departments are understaffed. Cities in St. Louis County, including University City (the largest in the county), run with three on a pumper and two on a ladder truck. These jurisdictions are forced to violate State law by relying on mutual aid to have an adequate number of fire fighters respond to an incident.

In Jefferson City, the State capital, the fire department runs with three or less fire fighters per apparatus and cannot even afford to hire fire fighters to serve on its weapons of mass destruction teams. Fire fighters have been asked to volunteer to serve on the team, undergo training, and respond while off duty.

The fire fighters of Baltimore, Maryland and Jefferson City, Missouri are as brave and capable as any in the Nation, but there is simply no way that they can safely protect the public with two people on a rig. Responding to emergency incidents with only two people makes it impossible for the first responding unit to comply with OSHA's "2-in/2-out" standard for safe fireground operation, and places the lives of those firefighters in jeopardy.

Congress would never allow our Army to engage in a war with two thirds of its divisions understaffed. Incredibly, this is exactly what we are asking our local fire departments to do in this current war on our home soil.

Currently, there are several proposals under consideration that would enable the Federal Government to fund the creation of new fire fighter positions. Legislation was introduced last year to create a program modeled after the COPS program, which has successfully put more police officers on the street. The Senate Committee on Commerce, Science and Transportation is also developing fire service legislation that would include a staffing component.

Madam Chair, without any new authorization your committee can remedy this chronic problem. The FIRE Act could easily be used as the appropriate vehicle for a major staffing initiative. The law already allows fire departments to request funding to "hire additional fire fighters," but FEMA has opted to exclude hiring from the list of grants it will fund. We believe that specific direction from this committee would enable FEMA to structure grants in such a way that could accommodate staffing. To ensure that staffing would not devour the rest of the FIRE Act program, we recommend that the FIRE Act be fully funded at \$900 million, with half of the money set aside for staffing.

The question of whether the funding for staffing is included as part of the FIRE Act or as a separate initiative is of secondary concern to the members of my organization. Whatever the appropriate vehicle, the Nation's fire fighters call upon this committee to work to provide the necessary resources for a nationwide fire fighter staffing initiative.

### *Training*

The second pillar that needs to be fortified is training. Far too many jurisdictions lack the funds to hire training instructors, purchase training equipment, or have access to training facilities. As a consequence, fire departments in these jurisdictions do not provide new fire fighters with the basic level of training identified by the National Fire Protection Association as necessary to perform the job safely and effectively. Throughout the Nation, too many fire fighters essentially receive on-the-job training. This is a situation that endangers not only the lives of the new fire fighters, but their fellow fire fighters and the public that they are sworn to protect.

While basic fire fighter training is a need for many fire fighters, all fire fighters need advanced training in hazmat and weapons of mass destruction (WMD) re-

sponse and mitigation. Terrorism using WMD threatens our Nation as never before. September 11, Oklahoma City, and other terrorist acts have demonstrated that these madmen will employ appallingly unthinkable measures to achieve their goals.

In fact, just a few short weeks after September 11, our Nation experienced its first biological terrorism when anthrax was mailed targeting elected officials and the media. During those frantic days in October, thousands of frightened Americans called their local fire department to report suspicious white powder, quickly overwhelming the capability of all dedicated hazmat crews. As a result, it was frontline fire fighters who responded to these calls, far too many of whom lacked hazmat training. It is now clear that all fire fighters need operations level hazardous materials/WMD response training.

Two solutions to the training shortage are the FIRE Act and the Administration's Homeland Security proposal. The members of this subcommittee have direct influence on both items and the IAFF urges you to fully fund both programs.

The FIRE Act and the Homeland Security proposal complement each other and offer the promise of covering the full spectrum of training. With full funding for the FIRE Act, cash strapped fire departments can begin to get the basic fire fighter training that is desperately needed. For the more specialized training, the Homeland Security proposal could be the means to fund the needed hazmat/WMD terrorism response training across the Nation.

Additionally, this subcommittee has jurisdiction over two innovative hazmat training programs. From the vantage point of front line emergency responders, the two crucial components of any hazmat training program are that the training is conducted in the local jurisdiction incorporating the unique aspects of the communities, and that it uses trainers who are both certified instructors and professional firefighters.

The advantage of training in one's own jurisdiction is self-evident. Training for a terrorism event in your own community allows first responders to not only learn the tactics and methods of effective response, but also apply these theoretical concepts to concrete targets in their jurisdiction. This value-added piece is missing when firefighters are forced to attend remote training sites.

The value of qualified firefighters teaching other firefighters is in the benefit gained by shared experiences. The bond of common experiences allows firefighter instructors to more effectively communicate the lessons of a training course than, say, a person from the academia or the military. These firefighter instructors know the fire fighting jargon and can speak the language and because they are both firefighters and subject matter experts, they command a great amount of respect from their students.

I am proud to note that the IAFF, in partnership with the EPA and NIEHS, offers training programs to all fire departments—free of charge—in hazmat response. The IAFF program focuses on emergency responder safety and has all the elements of a successful training program. We use skilled instructors, who are both hazmat technicians and certified instructors, to train fire departments to safely and effectively respond to conventional, biological, chemical, or nuclear hazmat incidents. Additionally, our program conducts the training in the community and incorporates the unique aspects of the localities. I am also proud to note that this training is available to all fire fighters, career and volunteer.

Especially since September 11, the demand for our training program far outpaces our funding to deliver it. If this subcommittee increases the appropriations to the EPA and NIEHS for our training program, we can meet this ever-growing demand and improve the security of our Nation.

#### *Equipment*

The third pillar that needs to be reinforced is equipment. Recently, the IAFF, which represents more than 90 percent of all the professional fire departments in the Nation, conducted a survey of our State Associations. Twenty-two States participated in the survey, representing 1364 fire departments (54 percent of all IAFF Locals).

Among the survey findings were:

- 43 percent of fire departments are in need of additional turnout gear (i.e., coats, gloves, helmets, and boots).
- 50 percent of fire departments are in need of additional respirators.
- 70 percent of fire departments do not have adequate maintenance programs for their protective gear.
- 66 percent of fire departments are in need of better communications equipment.

Our bleak survey results were validated by the analysis of last year's FIRE Act data. Of the 30,000+ grant requests submitted last year for the six eligible categories, 27,384 were for the three categories of personal protective equipment, fire

fighting equipment, and vehicles. The 27,384 grant requests in these three areas accounted for \$2.71 billion. Less than 5 percent of those grant requests were awarded.

As you know, the FIRE Act's purpose is to assist those fire departments most in need. Thus, there was a heavy emphasis on basic firefighting needs. The vast majorities of the grant requests were not for State of the art or specialized equipment. They were for the basic everyday firefighting and personal protective equipment.

A number of IAFF members served as grant evaluators. Some of them have told me they literally shed tears during the evaluation process because they denied requests to replace 15-year-old threadbare turnout coats that are shared by several fire fighters, because there were many departments in worse circumstances. It is a deplorable situation when fire fighters who possess barely functional equipment must consider themselves lucky because there are fire departments in such dire need that their fire fighters do not have basic equipment at all.

And beyond the need for basic equipment, there is a tremendous need for advanced hazmat equipment, in particular hazmat detecting equipment. As my organization has become increasingly involved in WMD emergency response, I have become convinced that the greatest threat to our safety comes not from sophisticated nuclear devices launched by foreign Nations, but from so-called "dirty bombs" that utilize a conventional explosion to release radioactive material. With minimal technical expertise, anyone with access to agricultural fertilizer could unleash an atomic reaction that threatens thousands of lives.

In the event of such a dirty bomb detonation, calls to 911 will only report an explosion and fire. Fire fighters responding to the scene will be completely unaware of the radiological contamination dispersed miles beyond ground zero.

For years we have been told that it is the job of the military, with their specialized training and sophisticated monitoring devices, to respond to such incidents. But the reality is that these military teams, as capable as they are, could be hours away. Meanwhile, the fire fighters are on the scene within minutes.

Thus, it is vital that all first responders have access to monitoring devices, and be provided with the proper training to use them accurately. When fire fighters are made aware of the radiological dangers, we can take the appropriate procedures to limit our exposure so that we can begin to conduct rescue and decontamination missions.

This subcommittee has the means to begin addressing the atrocious lack of equipment, both basic and specialized. First, again the FIRE Act must be fully funded. With approximately 26,000 requests unfulfilled from last year, we can be sure that basic firefighting and personal protective equipment will again be in demand.

Second, fully fund President Bush's proposals for Homeland Security. \$3.5 billion for equipment and training will go a long way towards closing the gap between the needs of the fire service for hazmat equipment and the resources available to obtain it.

#### CONCLUSION

Too often, the fire service has been neglected when it comes to planning and devoting resources to do our job. Yet, we are the first responders and the ones making the ultimate sacrifice to protect our Nation. As we pray for a quick and decisive resolution to the war in Afghanistan, we must not forget that the fire service stands guard, day-in and day-out, protecting our communities and our Nation.

The Federal Government, including Congress and the Administration, has begun to recognize that firefighters are the lynchpin to an effective and strong homeland security. The firefighters of the IAFF will be ready when the next alarm rings or when terrorists strike again. But our ranks are thin and reinforcements are needed quickly.

Congress must follow through and provide the resources to ensure that fire fighters have adequate staffing, proper training and the right equipment so that we will be able to do our job. Fully funding the FIRE Act and Homeland Security proposal, and increasing the funding for hazmat training are ways this subcommittee can meet this obligation. Our organization will never forget the sacrifice of 343 members on September 11. Hopefully their sacrifice and heroism will be the catalyst for the Federal Government to embrace its responsibility and provide the resources to allow our members to do their job safely and effectively.

Thank you for this time to present the view of the IAFF. I will be available for questions by the committee.

Senator MIKULSKI. Thank you very much. That was very compelling.

Chief Buckman, why do we not turn to you?

**STATEMENT OF JOHN M. BUCKMAN, III, CHIEF, INTERNATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF FIRE CHIEFS**

Mr. BUCKMAN. Good afternoon, Madam Chair and members of the subcommittee. I am John Buckman, Chief of the German Township Volunteer Fire Department in Evansville, Indiana, and President of the International Association of Fire Chiefs. The IAFC represents the leaders of America's fire and emergency services.

Thank you for the opportunity to advise you about the pressing needs of America's fire and emergency services and the status of the Assistance to Firefighters grant program administered by FEMA.

In the autumn of 2000, Congress authorized and funded the Assistance to Firefighters grant program. Its purpose is to assist departments in securing the fundamental tools of firefighting. You have heard the statistics. You know how many people applied. You know how much money they asked for.

FEMA established an office to administer the program and the criteria for the selection of recipients. Working to achieve the goals and priorities established by Congress, FEMA consulted with major fire service organizations and developed the specifics of the first Assistance to Firefighters grant program quickly and efficiently.

And let me say one thing about FEMA. They performed. Even with the events of September 11 and all the things that FEMA was called upon to do in those ensuing days, they still got the FIRE Act grant program done, completed, and the money out the door.

The events of September 11 demonstrated, once and for all, the critical role of the fire service in responding to national disasters. As a result, Congress has enacted several significant enhancements to the grant program for future years. Most significantly is your authorization to increase the funding to \$360 million for fiscal year 2002, and an additional 2 years of funding at a level of \$900 million, triple the original amount.

In addition new grant categories were added, including grants for equipment related to the response to terrorism incidents. These changes will pay extraordinary dividends to local fire departments and the citizens they protect around the country, and we thank you and Congress for enacting them.

As this record indicates, in a very short time the grant program has developed an impressive record of funneling desperately needed Federal resources directly to those who are on the front line of homeland security. That is America's fire service. Based on that record, we encourage you and Congress to utilize the Assistance to Firefighters grant program for any funds appropriated for the purpose of assisting the fire services' missions of domestic defense.

In his State of the Union address 1 week ago today, President Bush made a commitment to a sustained strategy for increased homeland security. The President has made clear that he considers a critical component of this strategy to be increased Federal funding for America's first responders.

In order to ensure that the full benefits of this increased funding are realized by the American people, we urge you and Congress to utilize the Assistance to Firefighters grant program for that portion of funding meant for the fire and emergency services.

We do not think there is a need to establish any new programs for terrorism preparedness. The mechanisms to get necessary local resources are already in place within FEMA. Let us use them. Use the existing programs. Congress can ensure that appropriated funds quickly reach where the rubber meets the road. It is America's fire service, the only people in the United States who are situated locally, trained, equipped, and sworn to respond within minutes to all incidents that are communities face.

The understaffing of fire departments is an issue that must be addressed. Whether a department is a career, combination, or volunteer, the level of staffing is an immediate issue, especially in light of today's reality.

Working with our counterparts at the International Association of Firefighters, we have strongly endorsed the bipartisan legislation, Staffing for Adequate Fire and Emergency Response, the SAFER bill, introduced by Senators Dodd and Warner, that will provide Federal assistance to local fire departments for the purpose of hiring new firefighters. Local governments would be required to pay an increasing share of the costs associated with new firefighters over a 3-year period until the local government assumes all responsibility for funding the new positions.

General President Schaitberger urged this morning to fully fund the Assistance to Firefighters grant program, one-half of that being allocated to staffing. And we agree with his objective and fully support it.

We anticipate that volunteer and combination fire departments will also have the opportunity to apply for grants to fund staffing within their departments. We believe that it is important that volunteers and combination departments have this opportunity.

The primary objective of adding 75,000 additional firefighters is raising the staffing level of fire departments throughout the country to four firefighters per unit. A four-person unit will yield a 100 percent increase in operational capacity with three-person companies. Under Federal administrative law and proper safety practices, firefighters must operate in teams of at least two people. Therefore, staffing a fire apparatus with four people will yield two working teams of two each, doubling the capacity of apparatus staffed with three personnel. Raising staffing levels to four personnel is a large undertaking but it is necessary.

Another aspect of this problem is the increased difficulty in recruiting and retaining volunteer firefighters. As a volunteer fire chief myself, I personally know how difficult that is. The reasons for this problem are varied and the solutions are complex. We will continue to work with Congress and you on these issues.

However, I would like to take a moment to applaud the National Fire Academy and their work in the volunteer incentive program. They have developed courses specifically designed for the volunteer firefighters to attend the National Fire Academy and to be exposed to the leadership courses that they present. Their curriculum reflects the diverse needs of the volunteer fire service, and the financial aid enables any volunteer firefighter in this country to attend their classes. The National Fire Academy is a critical supporter of the volunteer fire service and we are grateful.

In 1997, the Department of Defense and Justice began training and equipping local firefighters and police to deal with incidents of terrorism involving weapons of mass destruction. Similar programs have since been authorized by Congress bringing the Department of Health and Human Services, FEMA, and other Federal agencies into this effort. Without doubt, we have made progress. But preparedness efforts need to be more clearly focused.

In May of last year, President Bush proposed an Office of National Preparedness at FEMA. The ONP was to serve as a single point of contact for State and local public safety agencies charged with reviewing all Federal training and response programs spread all across a myriad of Federal agencies.

We have strongly endorsed the creation of the Office of National Preparedness in prior testimony before Congress and we reiterate that endorsement today. It has the support of America's first responders and represents a crucial step in the right direction. It is the logical extension of FEMA's responsibilities for disaster response and is consistent with President Bush's public announcement in May last year concerning the organization and management of Federal terrorism response programs and his creation of the Office of Homeland Security.

In the days immediately following the attacks of September 11, many Americans heard for the first time urban search and rescue, USAR, teams. As Chief Paulsell testified, there are 28 teams. We would agree with his analysis that we do not need more teams but we need to fully fund the existing teams.

In the metropolitan Washington area, for example, there are USAR teams in Fairfax County, Virginia and Montgomery County. In the event of a major structural collapse, such as occurred in New York City or in San Francisco a few years ago with their earthquake, any of these teams can be activated by FEMA. They travel distances far beyond their local jurisdictions to perform crucial rescue operations. By any measure, the effectiveness of USAR teams in response to a wide variety of disasters has been impressive. Building upon this proven track record, the IAFC has put forth several suggestions to enhance the effectiveness of USAR teams.

First, we are pleased to note that FEMA Director Joe Allbaugh has already proposed action on one of our initial recommendations, authority for credentialing, training, and deploying USAR teams will move to the U.S. Fire Administration. This organizational change will ensure that FEMA staff with operational fire experience will be leading the USAR program and coordinating the Federal response to a major disaster.

We also encourage the following additional changes to the USAR program. The IAFC believes that USAR should be expanded and upgraded by the formation of smaller, more mobile "USAR Lite" teams. Under the existing system, the Federal Government should assist the fire service in expanding a proven concept by creating additional smaller units within each State, which would include staffing levels and equipment caches with sufficient personnel and equipment to effectively function for 4 to 24 hours. These teams will be designed to be smaller, quicker to deploy, and in closer proximity to the emergency, and therefore have easier and more

rapid access to emergency scenes. Short response times are critical to saving lives. They are a critical consideration in search and rescue operations when looking for people buried beneath rubble. Time is what saves lives. This immediate response would be followed by the deployment of more traditional USAR teams, which would be activated and deployed in their usual manner.

We also believe there is a need for what we call command overhead teams. In talking with the firefighters, the chief officers from Arlington County that responded to the Pentagon incident, one of the problems they had was in having enough qualified people to manage the incident. The command overhead teams are similar to what the Bureau of Land Management does in wildland fires. It is often the case in prolonged major incidents where managing the incident, having enough skilled and competent people to do that, becomes a major issue. These local fire departments would welcome outside assistance to help manage the incident. The command overhead teams involve the creation of small groups of qualified, competent command officers who can be called upon on short notice to provide assistance to local efforts in an emergency at the request of a local incident commander.

The U.S. Fire Administration is a directorate within FEMA. Its mission is to provide leadership, coordination, and support for the Nation's fire prevention and control, fire training and education programs. The U.S. Fire Administration's ultimate objective is to significantly reduce the Nation's loss of life from fire.

Historically, leadership at the U.S. Fire Administration has been unstable. As the fire service moves forward with changes that it will make as a result of September 11, those changes will place an even greater leadership burden on the U.S. Fire Administration. That is why the Federal Government must move forward now to ensure that constancy and depth of leadership is in place throughout the U.S. Fire Administration.

I know my time is up. I will summarize with this comment.

Senator MIKULSKI. We have to leave the room at 1:00.

#### PREPARED STATEMENT

Mr. BUCKMAN. The fire service is America's domestic defender. We are the first ones inside and most of the time we are the last ones outside. We need and deserve Federal assistance because we have proven time and time again that we respond to all the communities' emergency needs. We need your help.

Thank you very much.

[The statement follows:]

#### PREPARED STATEMENT OF JOHN M. BUCKMAN, III

Good morning, Madam Chair and members of the subcommittee. I am Chief John Buckman, chief of the German Township Volunteer Fire Department in Evansville, Indiana and president of the International Association of Fire Chiefs (IAFC).

The IAFC represents the leaders of America's fire and emergency service, which consists of over 31,000 fire departments in the United States staffed by more than 1.1 million fire fighters and emergency medical services personnel. Of those, more than 800,000 are volunteers and about 250,000 are career personnel.

Thank you for this opportunity to advise you about the pressing needs of America's fire and emergency service and the status of the Assistance to Firefighters grant program administered by the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA).

## ASSISTANCE TO FIREFIGHTERS GRANT PROGRAM

In the autumn of 2000, Congress authorized and funded the Assistance to Firefighters grant program. Its purpose is to assist local departments in securing the fundamental tools of fire fighting. In its first year, nearly 20,000 fire departments sought support from the Federal government to improve fire prevention programs, upgrade training, purchase personal protective gear, apparatus and equipment, and enhance fitness and wellness programs to better enable personnel to mitigate the all-hazards incidents to which we respond. Grant requests totaling nearly \$3 billion were received by FEMA for the \$100 million available in fiscal year 2001.

FEMA established an office to administer the program and criteria for the selection of recipients. Working to achieve the goals and priorities established by Congress, FEMA consulted with major fire service organizations and developed the specifics of the first Assistance to Firefighters grant program quickly and efficiently.

The events of September 11th demonstrated, once and for all, the critical role of the fire service in responding to national disasters. As a result, Congress enacted several significant enhancements to the grant program for future years. Most significantly, funding for the program was increased to \$360 million for fiscal year 2002 and the program was reauthorized for an additional two years at a funding level of \$900 million—triple the original amount. In addition, new grant categories were added including grants for equipment related to the response to terrorism incidents. These changes will pay extraordinary dividends to local fire departments and the citizens they protect around the country and we thank you and Congress for enacting them.

As this record indicates, in a very short time the grant program has developed an impressive record of funneling desperately needed Federal resources directly to those who are on the frontline of homeland security, America's fire service. Based on that record, we encourage you and Congress to utilize the Assistance to Firefighters grant program for any funds appropriated for the purpose of assisting the fire service's mission of domestic defense.

In his State of the Union address one week ago today, President Bush made a commitment to a sustained strategy for increased homeland security. The president has made clear that he considers a critical component of this strategy to be increased Federal funding for America's fire and emergency service. In order to ensure that the full benefits of this increased funding are realized by the American people, we urge you and Congress to utilize the Assistance to Firefighters grant program for that portion of funding meant for the fire and emergency service. We do not think there is a need to establish any new programs for terrorism preparedness. The mechanisms to get necessary resources to local responders are in place. Let's use them. By using this existing program, Congress can ensure that appropriated funds quickly reach America's fire service—the only people in the United States who are situated locally and trained, equipped, and sworn to respond within minutes to all incidents, natural or man-made, which threaten the American homeland.

## ADDITIONAL FIREFIGHTER STAFFING

The understaffing of fire departments is an issue that must be addressed. Whether a department is a career, combination, or volunteer, the level of staffing is an immediate issue, especially in the light of today's reality.

Working with our counterparts at the International Association of Fire Fighters we have strongly endorsed bipartisan legislation—the Staffing for Adequate Fire and Emergency Response (SAFER) bill—introduced by Senators Christopher Dodd and John Warner that would provide Federal assistance to local fire departments for the purpose of hiring new fire fighters. Local governments would be required to pay an increasing share of the costs associated with the new fire fighters over a three-year period until the local government assumed all responsibility for funding the new positions.

The primary objective of adding 75,000 additional fire fighters is raising the staffing level of fire departments throughout the country to four fire fighters per unit. A four-person response unit will yield a 100 percent increase in operational capacity compared with three-person companies. Under Federal administrative law and proper safety practices, fire fighters must operate in teams of at least two people. Therefore, fire apparatus staffing of four will yield two working teams of two, doubling the capacity of apparatus staffed with three personnel which can only form one operational team. Raising staffing levels to four personnel is a large undertaking, but it is necessary.

Another aspect of this problem is the increasing difficulty in recruiting and retaining volunteer fire fighters. As a volunteer fire chief, I personally know how difficult this is. The reasons for this problem are varied, and the solutions complex. We will



continue to work with Congress on these issues. However, I would like to take a moment to applaud the National Fire Academy for its effective support of the volunteer fire service. Its curriculum reflects the diverse needs of the volunteer fire service and their generous financial aid enables many volunteer fire fighters to attend their classes. The National Fire Academy is a critical supporter of the volunteer fire service, and for that we are grateful.

#### OFFICE OF NATIONAL PREPAREDNESS

In 1997, the Departments of Defense and Justice began training and equipping local fire fighters and police to deal with incidents of terrorism involving weapons of mass destruction. Similar programs have since been authorized by Congress, bringing the Department of Health and Human Services, FEMA, and other Federal agencies into the effort. Without doubt we have made progress, but preparedness efforts need to be more clearly focused.

In May of last year, President Bush proposed an Office of National Preparedness (ONP) at FEMA. The ONP was to serve as a single point-of-contact for State and local public safety agencies, charged with reviewing all Federal training and response programs spread across myriad Federal agencies.

We have strongly endorsed the creation of the Office of National Preparedness in prior testimony before Congress, and we reiterate that endorsement today. It has the support of America's first responders and represents a crucial step in the right direction. We are pleased that this Committee approved and funded the Office of National Preparedness. It is a logical extension of FEMA's responsibilities for disaster response and it is consistent with President Bush's public announcement in May of last year concerning the organization and management of Federal terrorism response programs and his creation of the Office of Homeland Security.

#### USAR EXPANSION

In the days immediately following the attacks on September 11, 2001, many Americans heard for the first time about the Federal Emergency Management Agency's "Urban Search and Rescue" (USAR) teams. There are 28 teams, largely composed of local fire fighters with specialized training and equipment and extensive experience that can be deployed to major incidents throughout the country.

In the metropolitan Washington area, for example, there are USAR teams in Fairfax County, Virginia, and Montgomery County, Maryland. In the event of a major structural collapse—such as occurred in New York City, or a few years ago in the San Francisco earthquake—these teams or any of the other 26 can be "activated" by FEMA. They travel to the scene of disasters to perform crucial rescue operations.

By any measure, the effectiveness of the USAR teams, in response to a wide variety of disasters, has been impressive. Building upon this proven track record, the IAFC has put forth several suggestions to enhance the effectiveness of the USAR teams.

First, we are pleased to note that FEMA Director Joe Allbaugh has already proposed action on one of our initial recommendations—authority for credentialing, training and deploying Urban Search and Rescue teams will move to the U.S. Fire Administration (USFA). This organizational change will ensure that FEMA staff, with significant operational fire experience is in charge of this critical component of the Federal response to any major disaster.

We also encourage the following additional changes to the USAR program. The IAFC believes the USAR program should be expanded and upgraded by the formation of smaller, more mobile "USAR Lite" teams. The Federal government should assist the fire and emergency service in expanding a proven concept by creating additional smaller units in each State, which would include staffing levels and equipment caches with sufficient personnel and equipment to effectively function for 4 to 24 hours. These teams will be designed to be smaller, quicker to deploy, and closer in proximity to the emergency, and would therefore have easier and more rapid access to emergency scenes. Short response times are a critical consideration when the lives of people buried beneath rubble are at stake. This immediate response would be followed by the deployment of the more traditional USAR teams, which would be activated and deployed in their usual manner.

We also believe there also is a need for what we call "Command Overhead Teams." It is often the case in prolonged, major incidents that a fire department's commanders are fully engaged in addressing the instant issues and are hard-pressed to anticipate what might develop and to then plan for the future. They would welcome outside assistance. The "Command Overhead Teams" concept involves the creation of small groups of three-to-five experienced command officers

who can be called upon on short notice to provide assistance to local efforts in an emergency at the request of a local incident commander.

The USAR program has a well-deserved reputation for excellence. Based on this record we strongly encourage FEMA to implement these recommendations in order to further enhance the operational capabilities of this critical national resource.

#### FEDERAL LEADERSHIP

The U.S. Fire Administration is a directorate within FEMA. Its mission is to provide leadership, coordination, and support for the Nation's fire prevention and control, fire training and education, and emergency medical services activities. The U.S. Fire Administration's ultimate objective is to significantly reduce the Nation's loss of life from fire, while also achieving a reduction in property loss and non-fatal injury due to fire.

Historically, leadership at the U.S. Fire Administration has been unstable. As the fire service moves forward with changes that it will make as a result of the September 11th tragedy, those changes will place an even greater leadership burden on USFA. That is why the Federal government must move forward now to ensure that constancy and depth of leadership is in place throughout the organization to prepare the U.S. Fire Administration for the challenges that lie ahead and to meet the needs of the Nation.

Fortunately, FEMA Director Joe Allbaugh understands this need and has taken decisive action to provide leadership at the U.S. Fire Administration and provide it with the resources and oversight to effectively carry out its mission. We applaud Director Allbaugh's appointment of a strong leader with a distinguished fire service background as U.S. Fire Administrator. We further appreciate Director Allbaugh's recognition, as evidenced by his advocacy, of the role of America's fire and emergency service community in protecting our Nation's communities. His actions since assuming office will enhance the safety and security of all Americans.

#### CONCLUSION

Madam Chair, our testimony today has been strongly supportive of FEMA. The reason for this is simple. They have earned the support of the fire and emergency service based on a proven track record of providing invaluable training, equipment, and resources to America's local "first responder" community both on-scene at disaster sites and during the ongoing planning and training that all responder organizations must constantly pursue. They clearly recognize that America's local fire departments are the first line of disaster response in this country.

It is for this reason that we encourage Congress to utilize this Agency as you look to significantly enhance and improve America's readiness capabilities. President Bush has budgeted an unprecedented amount of Federal support for America's "first responders" in the name of homeland security. We strongly urge Congress to utilize existing programs, specifically the Assistance to Firefighters grant program administered by FEMA, to ensure that these funds are quickly disbursed to the local responders who will use them efficiently and effectively to provide for the security of the American homeland.

The International Association of Fire Chiefs very much appreciates the opportunity to appear before you today to discuss FEMA and the Assistance to Firefighters grant program. I am happy to answer any questions you may have.

Senator MIKULSKI. Thank you very much, and we do not want to cut anybody off. This has been so important, it ought to go on for a long time.

Mr. Stittleburg, why do you not bring to us the views of the National Fire Council? And we welcome you from Wisconsin. We have good representation here.

#### **STATEMENT OF PHILIP C. STITTLEBURG, CHAIRMAN, NATIONAL VOLUNTEER FIRE COUNCIL**

Mr. STITTLEBURG. Thank you, Madam Chairlady. I had the pleasure of making your acquaintance last fall at the fallen firefighters memorial service in Emmitsburg, and I thank you for your attendance there.

Senator MIKULSKI. It was when President Bush was there and then we shortly began to bomb Afghanistan. Harold and we were all there.

Mr. STITTLEBURG. It was indeed an important day. I thank you for your attendance. You did us honor by your presence.

My name is Chief Phil Stittleburg. I am Chairman of the National Volunteer Fire Council. I have been in the volunteer fire service for 30 years. I spent about 25 years of that serving as chief officer.

There are about 800,000 volunteer firefighters in the United States. About 90 percent of the fire departments in this country are volunteer fire departments. About 75 percent of all firefighters in this country are volunteer firefighters, and we protect about 38 percent of the United States population.

Volunteers give of their time, their talents. Sometimes they give their very lives. This donated time and talent that they provide translates directly into substantial dollar tax savings for the taxpayers. Estimates run as high as \$60 billion. That is with a B, \$60 billion or more a year provided just simply by the donated services of volunteer firefighters nationwide.

Volunteers were deeply involved in all the events surrounding September 11. Volunteer departments responded to the plane crash in Somerset County, Pennsylvania. We were part of the response to the Pentagon, as you have already heard. Volunteer departments provided backup to the World Trade Center disaster. A number of the firefighters from New York City who lost their lives, in fact, in the trade center were also volunteers in their own home communities.

September 11 sent many messages. I think the clearest of all is that the fire service is indeed the first responder to terrorist attacks. Terrorism is going to expand our responsibilities. I can tell you we will meet that challenge. That is part of the proud history of the fire service, meeting challenges.

I will tell you also we will not meet it without a struggle. One of the struggles that the volunteer fire service encounters is that of funding. Most, if not all, of us struggle routinely for the dollars we need to operate. The dollars provide protective clothing to our members, safety equipment, the necessary training that they need, and that is not even taking into account the money it takes to actually buy the equipment to mitigate the hazard itself.

It is not just a rural problem. Suburban areas likewise are seeing expanded demands for their services which translates into greater demand for dollars. And technology I think offers some solutions, but it is often solutions at a high price.

In the first panel there was some discussion about the radio communications. A couple of years ago, I had an opportunity to speak with a major radio communications manufacturer. I said, what is in the pipeline? What kind of technology is out there that you are going to be giving us in the coming years? And his response was, anything you want. And I said, well, what do you mean by that? And he said, it is as simple as this. If you can dream it, we can build it, but you cannot afford to buy it.

What we need to do is support the development of technology that becomes affordable, and we can do that in a number of ways.

I suggest we can do it through exploring technology transfer. We look to industry. We look to the space program. We look to the military for other pieces of technology that are already in place that are adaptable to our mission. I think Chief Paulsell made some reference. The marriage he referred to it as. We need to be able to draw upon that technology that is already there.

Most of the previous speakers already referred to the Assistance to Firefighters grant program, and I will simply echo what they said by indicating, first of all, it was a tremendous first step. It was certainly a step in the right direction and it was a giant step. Unfortunately, it is not enough.

Just to highlight the significance of it because when that program was being considered, I heard some people say, well, I wonder if the fire service is really listening. I wonder if really the need is there. Well, there were 31,000-plus grant requests received from nearly 19,000 fire departments. Bearing in mind there are only 26,000 fire departments in the United States, there were nearly 19,000 departments requesting money. \$3 billion requested; \$100 million appropriated. Interestingly enough, 1,855 grants were awarded. 1,379 of those were awarded to communities under 20,000 people.

And I salute you for your efforts in that regard having increased that appropriation for this year to \$360 million. You have also expanded the category to fire department sponsored EMS, and that was a good move. EMS is a rapidly expanding area for us, and that was I think a very wise choice. The \$900 million that is proposed for 2003 and 2004, I would certainly strongly encourage you to support that and authorize those funds.

President Bush has recommended the role that volunteers play in homeland defense, and specifically he has asked the public to volunteer. He has talked about something called the first responder initiative. As I understand it, he proposes that to enhance homeland security and proposes \$3.5 billion in fiscal year 2003 for that. We certainly support that. We would wish to be closely involved in the development of that program and would ask your support for it also.

As to the distribution of funds, I would echo what I think nearly every speaker ahead of me has said, and that is the Assistance to Firefighters grant program I think has been an absolute model of Government efficiency. As my colleague, Chief Buckman said, it put the money where the people needed it and it did it quickly. It did it with very little shrinkage. It did it by bringing in people who volunteered their time to review the grant applications, people who were knowledgeable and in a position to fairly evaluate those at a cost to the Government of only the travel. They donated their time and their talents to do this.

Another issue for the volunteer sector is that of recruitment and retention. Chief Buckman mentioned staffing. That is our staffing. Recruitment and retention of our staffing, and it is a serious problem for us. There are about 100,000 less volunteer firefighters in this country today than there were in 1983, and I find that to be a pretty frightening statistic. I am not here to tell you that the volunteer fire service is dying. To paraphrase Mark Twain, the reports

of our demise have been greatly exaggerated. However, there is a problem and we do need help to stay healthy.

There are, I believe, a number of factors that contribute to this challenge that we face in recruitment and retention, one of which is fund raising demands. As equipment becomes more expensive, as more equipment is required, more time is spent on raising the funds to buy that equipment, which seems to me to be illogical.

In some areas, calls are increasing, and that of course, is a matter of concern.

Training requirements continue to increase, and that certainly has an impact.

And this all occurs at a point when there is less time to volunteer. All the statistics seem to show that we spend more time at our jobs today than we did years ago. There are more two-earner families now, so there are less people to share the housekeeping duties and things of that nature.

President Bush in his State of the Union address asked for everyone to commit to service to their neighbors to become volunteers. Let me tell you, when it comes to that, we are the experts. We have been doing that for 300 years. We wrote the book on it.

He laid out a plan for the USA Freedom Corps, which would create a new citizens corps. As I understand it, FEMA is to coordinate the citizens corps. The Bush administration I believe has proposed \$230 million for fiscal year 2003. Once again, I would strongly urge that you support that.

#### PREPARED STATEMENT

We have a vested interest in promoting and protecting the volunteers in this country. America has a vested interest in promoting and protecting the volunteers of this country. I am very honored to share these thoughts with you today. I thank you for your past support. I ask you for your future support. I can assure you that we take good care of the dollars you give us, and the dollars you give us directly benefit your constituents.

I would be pleased to take any questions. Thank you.  
[The statement follows:]

#### PREPARED STATEMENT OF PHILIP C. STITTLEBURG

Madam Chairman and members of the committee, my name is Phil Stittleburg and I am Chairman of the National Volunteer Fire Council (NVFC). The NVFC represents the interests of the Nation's nearly 800,000 volunteer firefighters, who staff over 90 percent of America's fire departments. I have served in the volunteer fire service for the last 30 years and have been the Chief of the LaFarge Volunteer Fire Department in Wisconsin for the last 25 years. I have had experiences in all phases of the first responder community, including chemical and hazardous materials incidents, information management, EMS, rescue and fire.

In addition to serving as NVFC Chairman, I have represented the NVFC on a variety of standards-making committees, including ones that set industry standards on firefighter health and safety. I also serve on the National Fire Protection Association's Board of Directors and I am an adjunct instructor for the National Fire Academy. I earn my livelihood as an attorney, which includes serving as an Assistant District Attorney on a half-time basis for the last 28 years. These positions give me an excellent opportunity to work in emergency services in both the law enforcement and fire service professions. On behalf of the volunteer fire service, I appreciate the opportunity to comment on needs and challenges we face.

According to the National Fire Protection Association (NFPA), nearly 75 percent of all firefighters are volunteers. In most years more than half of the firefighters that are killed in the line of duty are volunteers. In addition to the obvious contribu-

tion that volunteer firefighters lend to their communities as the first arriving domestic defenders, these brave men and women represent a significant cost saving to taxpayers, a savings sometimes estimated to be as much as \$60 billion.

September 11, 2001 is a date that will be long remembered for the horrible losses our Nation suffered, including the loss of so many of our brothers and sisters in the emergency services. September 11 will also be remembered for the heroics of those brave men and women who ran into the World Trade Center to render aid to their fellow New Yorkers, those who valiantly fought the raging fire at the Pentagon in Arlington, VA, and the fire companies who responded to the Somerset County, PA plane crash. Volunteer fire, rescue, EMS, and technical specialty teams answered and responded on that fateful day at Somerset and the Pentagon incidents and provided backup support to many departments who responded to the World Trade Center. Finally, September 11 will be remembered for ushering in America's new all out war against terrorism at home and abroad.

The September 11 tragedies in New York, Arlington, Virginia and Southwestern Pennsylvania made it clear to all Americans that the fire service is the first responder to all terrorist attacks this country may face. Administration officials and Members of Congress continue to warn Americans of a "clear and present danger" of follow-up terrorist attacks. The question now is when and where, not if, the next terrorist attack will occur. As America's domestic first responders, the fire service will be on the front lines of any incident and must be prepared to respond to and defend our citizens from the ravages of terrorist attacks using conventional weapons or weapons of mass destruction. This expands our normal services beyond the delivery of fire, EMS, rescue, and technical specialty services to our citizens. These services already have time and training demands that are escalating annually.

America's fire and emergency services are in need of your assistance and you, as Members of the United States Senate, can make a difference by partnering with the fire service to give America's domestic defenders the tools they need to help fight this new war.

One of the largest problems faced by America's volunteer fire service is funding. Many volunteer fire departments struggle to provide their members with adequate protective clothing, safety devices and training to protect their communities, as mandated by regulations and standards. These fire companies, in towns across America, are being asked to respond to emergency calls involving hazardous materials, structural fire suppression, search and rescue, natural disasters, wildland fires, emergency medical services, and terrorism.

Many of these emergencies occur at Federal facilities and buildings and on Federal lands. In addition, these incidents can damage America's critical infrastructure, including our interstate highways, railroads, bridges, tunnels, financial centers, power plants, refineries, and chemical manufacturing and storage facilities. We as a fire service are sworn to protect these critical facilities and infrastructure.

In these difficult times, while volunteer fire departments are already struggling to handle their own needs and finances, they are now forced to provide more services. Often, local governments are unable to afford the extensive training and specialized equipment that these activities require.

The funding problems in America's volunteer fire service are not just limited to rural areas. As suburbs continue to grow, so does the burden on the local fire and EMS department. Even though many of these departments have the essentials, they are unable to gain access to new technologies. At no other time have advances been greater in equipment to protect them and make their jobs safer. Yet because the newer technology is so expensive, many volunteer fire departments are forced to forgo the purchase of the new technology or use outdated equipment.

Long before the terrorist attacks of September 11, the national fire service organizations began working together to enhance readiness and increase funding levels for programs related to America's fire departments. Many Members of Congress have been with us since day one and have fought hard for improvement in the fire service. Unfortunately, it has taken a horrible tragedy for all of America to fully appreciate the risks our firefighters and EMS personnel take on a daily basis and the level to which they need to be prepared.

The following items are some of the needs of America's fire service:

First and foremost, we urge Congress to fully fund the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) Assistance to Firefighters Grant Program. This direct grant program has proved to be the most effective program to date in providing local volunteer and career fire departments not only with the tools they need to perform their day-to-day duties, but it has also enhanced their ability to respond to large disasters as well.

In 2000, Congress took a giant step in addressing the needs of America's fire service by creating this grant program and funding it at the \$100 million level. Every

fire department across the country was eligible for funding for safety and fire-fighting equipment, apparatus, training, prevention, and wellness and fitness programs. In the first year of the program, the U.S. Fire Administration (USFA) and FEMA received 31,295 grant applications from 18,915 fire departments totaling \$2.99 billion in requests. In the end, USFA/FEMA awarded 1,855 competitive grants to local fire departments, including 1,375 to volunteer and combination fire departments. In addition, 1,379 grants totaling \$55,377,798 were awarded in communities with populations below 20,000 people. Many of these were rural volunteer fire departments that struggle the most to provide their members with adequate protective gear, safety devices and training to protect their communities.

Thanks to your leadership, Madam Chairman, and the support of your colleagues, the funding for the program was increased to a total of \$360 million in fiscal year 2002. This increase in funding has allowed FEMA to add fire department based emergency medical services (EMS) as an eligible category this year. EMS calls continue to be the fastest growing burden on local fire departments and these new grants will help to ease that burden. Late last year, Congress also passed a reauthorization of the FEMA Assistance to Firefighters Grant Program for \$900 million for each of the fiscal years 2002 through 2004. We respectfully request that Congress fully fund this program at the \$900 million level in fiscal year 2003.

An increase in funding for the program will allow more departments to obtain the firefighting and safety equipment, training, and vehicles they so desperately need to do their jobs. It would also allow FEMA to continue to expand the grant categories the program offers to include fire department construction and modification, as well as grants for recruitment and retention initiatives.

Terrorism and hazardous materials response training and equipment are of vital importance to America's fire service. Even the best-prepared localities lack adequate resources to respond to the full range of terrorist threats this country faces. Many jurisdictions, especially those in rural and suburban areas protected by volunteers, have little or no capability to respond to terrorist attacks using weapons of mass destruction.

In the President's budget, the Administration has outlined plans for a new First Responder Initiative, which proposes to spend \$3.5 billion in fiscal year 2003 to dramatically enhance the homeland security response capabilities of America's local fire, EMS, and police departments. This proposed program, which would be administered through FEMA, will allocate approximately \$105 million for planning, \$2 billion for equipment, \$1.1 billion for training, and \$245 million for exercises. The National Volunteer Fire Council fully supports this program and we ask Congress to do the same.

However, although we understand that some small fire departments are better served through structured training from State training organizations, we are concerned about the possibility that a large portion of this new funding for equipment and training will get bogged down in State agencies and will not get down to the local first responders. We look forward to working with the Congress and FEMA to ensure that this program reaches needy departments. The efficient administration of the Assistance to Firefighters Grant Program could well serve as a model for distributing these funds.

In addition, although we understand the special needs and concerns of America's large metropolitan areas, Congress and FEMA cannot forget smaller communities, whose fire, rescue and EMS personnel also need the basic training and equipment to recognize and respond to these incidents. While these communities may not seem to be prime terrorist targets, it is this very perception that makes them especially vulnerable.

Another critical need in America's volunteer fire service is the recruitment and retention of volunteer personnel. Over the past 20 years the volunteer fire service has seen its ranks decrease by nearly 15 percent. Major factors contributing to the problem of recruiting and retaining volunteers include but are not limited to constant fundraising demands, increase in emergency calls, more rigorous training standards, and people working further away from the communities in which they live.

In the President's State of the Union address last week, he encouraged all Americans to commit to service of their neighbors and their Nation by becoming volunteers. He also laid out a plan to create a new USA Freedom Corps, which will include a newly created Citizen Corps, along with the existing AmeriCorps, Senior Corps, and Peace Corps programs. The programs will work with local officials and community groups to offer expanded volunteer opportunities for Americans at home and abroad.

The Citizen Corps would further utilize volunteers to identify threats and respond to emergencies, including much-feared biological or chemical attacks. The Citizen

Corps will enable Americans to volunteer to participate directly in homeland security efforts in their own communities. Community-based Citizen Corps Councils will help drive local involvement in Citizen Corps, developing community action plans, assessing possible threats, identifying local resources and coordinating other Citizen Corps programs. These Councils will include leaders from law enforcement, fire and emergency medical services, businesses and other community-based institutions.

We understand that the Federal Emergency Management Agency will coordinate the Citizen Corps effort and the Bush Administration has proposed more than \$230 million in funding in their fiscal year 2003 budget. The NVFC and the volunteer fire service looks forward to playing a large role in this exciting new initiative and we urge Congress to support it.

When I began my testimony today, I stated that the volunteer fire service is in need of your assistance and that you, as Members of Congress, could make a difference with the necessary funding. I hope that I have painted a picture that illustrates that the need is real, that the money does go a long way, and that the continued support of the fire service by Congress is indeed a national concern.

Madam Chairman, I thank you for your time and your attention to the views of America's fire service, and I would be happy to answer any questions you may have.

Senator MIKULSKI. Thank you very much. That was all excellent, outstanding testimony, and exactly kind of the navigational chart we need to move ahead.

Senator BOND, I know you have a caucus meeting. Why do I not turn to you and then I will do the wrap-up questions.

#### SUPPORT OF BASIC FIREFIGHTING EQUIPMENT

Senator BOND. Thank you very much, Madam Chair. I will be brief. I think we have so many good things to work on here, we are going to need to continue to have your input.

Mr. Schaitberger, I was really impressed by the facts and the figures you gave us about the declining of the inadequate support of basic firefighting equipment. Frankly, I would hope that your message is heard by the citizens of St. Louis County and the citizens of Baltimore, that there has to be a renewed emphasis on the local support of firefighting. There is no way that the Federal Government is going to pick up these expenses, and I do not think anybody wants to have firefighting controlled by the Federal Government.

But having said that, we are firmly committed and we know that this committee is going to provide the maximum support that we can, the fire grant and all the other programs, because they ought to be in addition to what the local governments ought to do.

One of the things that worries me, from what you say, is that if we triple the fire grants, there may be cutbacks. What do you suggest we do to make sure that what we provide from the Federal Government does not supplant or excuse the local governments from making their essential contributions to the basic system?

Mr. SCHAIBERGER. I think the experience with the first FIRE Act grants is a great example of how it can work. That money went directly to fire departments, and the way the act is structured, the way the regulations are provided helped to ensure that the money really went to the departments. That is our biggest concern. We have seen a lot of money in this Federal Government go to a lot of State and local agencies and quite often the funds do not get down to the program level where they are intended. That is, quite frankly, some of my great concern with our homeland defense as at least I am reading some of the very general descriptions of those funds.



So, my suggestion is straightforward. You write it and design it to make sure that it goes to the departments.

Senator BOND. And I think we probably will continue to have a maintenance of effort requirement because we are demanding more.

Senator MIKULSKI. It is in addition to, not in lieu of.

#### RESPONSE TO TERRORIST ATTACKS

Senator BOND. Yes, the terrorism and the other things require a much greater response, and we cannot tolerate the Federal funds going in to enhance your capabilities while lessening the local commitment.

I might turn to Chief Buckman. As you mentioned, we have provided \$360 million this year but now allow some of that funding for training and equipment to respond to the terrorism incident. What is your view on how much of the funds should be used to build the capacity of fire departments to respond to terrorist acts? Several scenarios have been mentioned in the testimony. Should that be targeted towards terrorist attacks and perhaps providing radiation detection equipment? The dirty bomb scenario is a possible use. What kind of criteria would you suggest?

Mr. BUCKMAN. Whatever percentage I say would be wrong because I have not done the threat assessment, but I do believe that FEMA either has or is in the process of doing a threat assessment and what the local responders' capabilities are. I would say once we have done that and completed that threat assessment, then we can determine a percentage of what that new money might go for as it relates to responding to terrorism.

Senator BOND. Chief Stittleburg, I have seen in your background that in your spare time you practice law. So, as a fellow recovering lawyer, let me ask a legal related question.

#### LIABILITY OF DONATED FIRE EQUIPMENT

One of the things that we have heard from a number of areas, particularly where volunteer fire departments need equipment and they seek donations, many corporations, many businesses that have equipment that they might donate are concerned about the possible liability that would ensue if they donated equipment. Obviously, nobody is going to forgive an intentional or willful turnover of equipment, but if there is equipment that is being phased out in businesses, everybody thinks it is good, it would be helpful for the fire departments, volunteer and perhaps even career fire departments, to get it, is there a liability issue that we ought to address to make it easier to get equipment into the hands of fire departments?

Mr. STITTLEBURG. Well, Senator, we certainly view it that way and in fact have supported legislation that would grant immunity in those sorts of situations to the donor for precisely that reason, to encourage the passing on of equipment, though used still serviceable, to those that are more needy. That has certainly been, in fact, a priority piece of legislation with us for some time.

Senator BOND. Well, Madam Chair, we will have some more questions for the record. I appreciate your time and the time of our witnesses, and I thank both panels for some very compelling testi-

mony and laying the groundwork for a lot of effort that we are going to have to put in. We thank you. We thank your members and your participants for all you do. We are going to be coming to the rescue of our under-resourced fire and first responder communities.

Senator MIKULSKI. Thank you very much, Senator Bond. I think what is clearly emerging here are a couple of principles, and I will go to my questions.

#### FIRE GRANT PROGRAM

First of all, I think what we are all clear about is what we want to be able to do to our first responders is to help them become all-hazard responders. So, in our own hometown of Baltimore where we have many chemical plants, whether it was caused by an accident or whether it was caused by a malevolent intent, the response is the same. While we figure out who did it or why it happened, your response has to be the same. So, we need to have you as all-hazard responders.

The second is keep local control and not go through trickle-down bureaucracies and coordinators of the coordinators. Therefore, there should be direct funding to the fire departments themselves, and also that should be in addition to not in lieu of local funding.

And third, really do not reinvent the wheel. We have a couple of basic programs that even now while we are sorting out what does the President mean, how does the President want to do it in this very condensed appropriations year because we have to be done by October 4, and we want to be done with our bill really in June.

Senator BOND. June.

Senator MIKULSKI. It is like a little echo chamber here.

If we really focus on doing the appropriate funding level for the Fire Grant program where everybody is learning how to use it and also the urban search and rescue, we will really have created a momentum, knowing that whatever we do this year is not the only thing we are going to do or the only way we are going to do it. But we have got to keep the momentum going and get those resources now.

Am I correct in saying that is really your core recommendations and to stay the course?

Harold, in many ways you represent big city/urban. You represent a lot more than that, but really the big cities that are often the biggest target of threat, and then the suburbs come in doing the backup like Mr. Morris talked about. What do you think is the best way to really help these urban fire departments? Stick with the Fire Grant program for now.

Mr. SCHAITBERGER. Right now the Fire Grant program I think works great. We just have to make sure, particularly in the big cities, that we do not allow the mayors, city councils to back in the grant by, in effect, reducing their initial obligation to the department which they were responsible for or which they intended to provide and you simply are allowing the Federal dollars to come in the front door of the department while the city dollars are going out the back door. There has to be assurance that their commitment to their fire departments fiscally are maintained or growing and then the Federal dollars added to it.

Senator MIKULSKI. So, that would be the maintenance of effort that Senator Bond talked about.

Mr. SCHAITBERGER. Yes.

Senator MIKULSKI. So, again, our effort becomes in addition to not in lieu of.

Mr. SCHAITBERGER. Correct.

Senator MIKULSKI. Yes. I think that is really an excellent recommendation.

Did you know in the Fire Grant program Baltimore City got \$300,000?

Mr. SCHAITBERGER. I did. That is not a surprise, Madam Chair.

Senator MIKULSKI. No, no, no. It was all competitive. I want you to know this. I want to also say this because I am going to really need the help of the leadership. Senator Bond and I, my counterparts in the House, Congressman Walsh and Congressman Mollohan, really said no earmarking. No earmarking. This had to be based on, first of all, the criteria of the bill, peer review, and evaluation. Essentially our job is to get the money to the Fire Grant program but not to designate it. I am really going to need your help to resist your fire departments requesting earmarks because we will lose control over it.

And I love earmarks. I have been doing a lot of good with earmarks.

But really, I like the way this Fire Grant program worked. The peer review. Again, you talked about that the firefighters were actually there. They knew how to evaluate it. I read the testimony where they were in tears about how threadbare equipment, fire departments could not be funded, and so on. So, please help me by keeping it peer-reviewed and then go for at least the \$900 million. That would be an excellent approach.

#### FUND RAISING EFFORTS OF LOCAL FIRE DEPARTMENTS

Let me go to the fund raising of the volunteer fire departments. Could you tell me, is this a big deterrent in terms of the recruitment of volunteer firefighters? And if you could tell me how much time is spent by the volunteer firefighters? Mr. Stittleburg, maybe you could comment on this and Chief Buckman.

Mr. STITTLEBURG. It is certainly a significant factor, Madam Chairlady, and it varies from department to department across the Nation because some departments draw more of their funds from the municipality. Some, on the other hand, are totally funded by their own fund raising. But it certainly is in every instance a significant commitment of time.

One of the things I think, to the volunteer sector, the grant program provides is literally buying time. That may seem to be inconsistent, but in addition to the value of the equipment that is purchased, which has its own utilitarian value, when we get the money from FEMA to buy that equipment, we literally have bought back time that would have been spent by us doing this fund raising. So, it has a double value to us beyond just the value of the equipment received. It also redeems our time to take the training which is now going to be targeted, for instance, toward terrorism and issues of this nature.

I do not have a specific number I can give you, but I can tell you that it is not uncommon for it to be several hours per week frequently spent just on the fund raising activities.

Senator MIKULSKI. Thank you. Interesting insights.

Chief Buckman?

Mr. BUCKMAN. I would agree with Chief Stittleburg in that it is really difficult to quantify, but I would say this that it is probably at least one or two nights a week in many fire departments. But if you can imagine trying to raise \$300,000 to buy a fire truck. How much time would that take? Whether you are selling raffles, chicken dinners, or doing bingo, how much time is that going to take? It is going to take a tremendous amount of time.

The young people who join the volunteer fire departments today do not join to raise money. They join to make runs and help people. And that is where the conflict comes in in the volunteer fire service. The chief says we have got to raise money. The young volunteers say, I am not going to participate, but I want new equipment. So, that becomes a retention issue as well. Well, if I am not going to get new equipment, I am not going to volunteer anymore. So, we do need help with recruitment and retention, and we do need help with these funds through the FIRE Act.

Senator MIKULSKI. I think that is excellent. What you were saying is if there is only so much time a person can give, and even if they are willing to do the fund raising, essentially the chicken dinners and the bingo calling—and in our State we have money wheels; other States do it differently—but you are either going to be at the fire hall on a Friday night raising money and your family is proud of you because you are a volunteer or you are going to be there on Friday night ready to answer a call. But you do not get any more time because of family and job. You just cannot. I think that is an excellent, excellent viewpoint.

I think the liability issues for donated equipment—though as wonderful as donated equipment is and we appreciate it, we would never run a clothing drive for our Marines.

Mr. BUCKMAN. Thank you, Madam Chair. You are exactly right.

Senator MIKULSKI. In other words, I could see some additional things like computers, the kinds of things particularly like technology, if they had those palm machines that they are ready to turn over so you could better communicate among yourselves. But we are not running used clothing drives or used car sales for our fire departments. This is not a charity operation. We do not want you to have to forage for funds, which is essentially what you are doing. And we need you to have what is the most protective gear available at the time. Best available technology, best available gear that we can then help you be able to afford to buy.

And what does it mean? I am just going to come back and close out by this. I believe the better equipped fire departments are, the lower home ownership insurance rates will be. In other words, the more we can do fire prevention—we have not even talked about all your education, the way you go into schools, the way you are often the “officer friendlies” of fighting fires, the way you go around to make sure everybody has got smoke detectors. We are talking about terrorism here, but often your first job is to prevent fires in

local communities and be able to respond to them. This really takes a tremendous effort.

I have lots more questions.

We want to think this through. I like President Bush's commitment. We appreciate that. We appreciate that he actually put it in his budget. Now we have to sort out how he wants to do it organizationally, but while we are sorting that out—and there are going to be turf issues and Justice does not want to do this and all of those things—you should not have to worry about that. Let us worry about it. Give us your advice and commentary. We might be able to get it done, but for this year, to make a really firm commitment to full funding as a minimum—minimum—to our Fire Grant program and keeping politics out of it, and at the same time really do our maximization of our urban search and rescue, I think then we will have done a very good job this year, knowing next year we have another good job to do.

Mr. SCHAITBERGER. It sounds like music to my ears.

Mr. STITTLEBURG. Madam Chairman, I can think of little that would make me happier.

#### CONCLUSION OF HEARING

Senator MIKULSKI. Well, let me just say to each and every one of the people that you represent at this table, thank you. God bless you and God bless America.

The subcommittee stands recessed until the call of the Chair.

[Whereupon, at 1:06 p.m., Tuesday, February 5, the hearing was concluded, and the subcommittee was recessed, to reconvene subject to the call of the Chair.]