

Opening Statement of Senator George V. Voinovich
Subcommittee on Oversight of Government Management, the Federal Workforce and the
District of Columbia
"Securing the National Capital Region: An Examination of the NCR's Strategic Plan."
September 28, 2006

Good morning. Thank you for joining us. Today, the Subcommittee on Oversight of Government Management, the Federal Workforce and the District of Columbia meets for the third time this Congress to examine the collective ability of the governments and responsible authorities of the National Capital Region, or NCR, to respond to a terrorist attack or natural disaster.

The National Capital Region is the seat of the federal government and, as a symbol of freedom to the world, remains a prime target for a terrorist attack. At the same time, the record breaking rains the region experienced in June, which closed down streets all over the region, disabled parts of the metro system and closed federal buildings, demonstrated that we must be prepared to respond to all-hazards.

In June 2004, GAO released a report which recommended that the Office of the National Capital Region Coordination, within the Department of Homeland Security, work with local jurisdictions to develop a coordinated strategic plan to establish goals and priorities, monitor the plan's implementation, and identify and address gaps in emergency preparedness. In addition, I believe that any strategic plan must include measurable performance goals.

At our first Subcommittee hearing in July 2005, Mr. Lockwood testified that a final strategic plan would be released in September 2005. Although a year late, I am pleased to see that the NCR has developed a strategic plan to prevent, protect, and respond to a terrorist attack or a natural disaster.

I am also pleased to learn that it was a collaborative effort between all jurisdictions within the NCR. With a region that is comprised of many federal, state and local jurisdictions, all playing a part in decision-making, it certainly makes the job more difficult. As former Mayor and Governor, I understand the importance of both state and local officials collaboratively working together toward a unified goal, and I know how challenging it can be. Mr. Lockwood, I look forward to hearing how you coordinated federal, state, and local officials to complete this plan.

I am also pleased to learn that the NCR worked with the Government Accountability Office to develop this strategic plan. I encourage you all to continue this relationship as the plan matures over time. Mr. Jenkins, I am interested in learning GAO's assessment of this strategic plan and the role of your agency in the process.

I am also interested in examining specific capabilities and programs in the NCR. Based upon the last Subcommittee hearing on the NCR, it was not clear if the region had an effective, interoperable communications system. Earlier this month, my Subcommittee staff attended an NCR interoperable communications exercise, the purpose of which was to demonstrate voice

communication capabilities across the region. I understand that the exercise was a success and I am pleased to know that the NCR is able to communicate in a time of crisis. I am interested in hearing from our panel how the NCR plans to enhance interoperable communications in the region to include data capabilities.

Since September 11, 2001, the NCR has received significant resources for equipment, training, planning, and other preparedness efforts. At the last hearing we discussed the development of a web-based tracking program to manage and monitor the region's Urban Area Security Initiative grants. However, I still have concerns with the lack of information regarding non-UASI funding in this database, as there is significant non-UASI funding flowing into this region. Without a central system to track all types of grants, I am concerned that it will make it difficult to prioritize initiatives and lead to duplicative spending. I look forward to learning if the region plans to fully implement the recommendation of GAO to track all grant funding.

Before concluding my remarks, I would like to again recognize the hard work and dedication of all of the panelist today and the first responders in the region. Your work and dedication is vital to improving the safety of the NCR. We recently observed the five year anniversary of 9/11. This anniversary reminds us all of the threat that still looms to the region and the need to be diligent in every aspect of securing the NCR. I offer whatever assistance I can to ensure you have the necessary resources to get the job done, and I assure you that I will continue to monitor the progress in the region.

I now yield to the Ranking Member of the Subcommittee, my good friend, Senator Akaka, for an opening statement.