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**COG CHIEF ADMINISTRATIVE OFFICERS (CAO) COMMITTEE  
BRIEFING TO THE STAFF OF THE NATIONAL CAPITAL REGION  
CONGRESSIONAL DELEGATION**

Joint Testimony of

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## Welcome/Opening Statement

Good Morning. I am Anthony Griffin, Chief Administrative Officer of Fairfax County and Chair of the Chief Administrative Officers Committee for the Metropolitan Washington Council of Government and the National Capital Region. I am pleased to come before you today for our second briefing on the Status of Emergency Planning and Preparedness in the National Capital Region (NCR).

Let me begin by saying that my colleagues, the chief administrative officers of NCR – responsible for the police officers, fire fighters and managers who are the area’s first responders in an emergency – are among the finest in the nation. They responded in an exemplary manner on 9/11 and they continue to be ready to respond 24/7. Today we are pleased to present to you an update on activities in the National Capital Region, including the steps we have taken to enhance readiness and ensure our citizens’ security while working with the Office of National Capital Region (ONCRC) and our colleagues representing the Governors of Maryland and Virginia to develop a strategic plan to guide us in futures enhancements. We have also reached out beyond our borders to begin coordinating with jurisdictions outside the NCR to ensure continuity of effort in the event of an incident of regional impact.

What you will hear today is that the NCR continues to be ready to respond to a terrorist attack or a natural disaster because of our commitment to sound emergency planning and close regional coordination. With the support of our congressional delegation, the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) Urban Area Security Initiative program, we have been able to purchase equipment and enhance our planning capability to respond to any situation in the NCR.

Today, we will review with you what we discussed in October, specifically, who’s in charge of emergency preparedness in the region and how we are prepared to use the National Incident Management System and coordinate with the appropriate state and federal officials and the U.S. military when necessary.

We discussed risk-based evacuation plans that are in place and how transportation agencies are ready to work with each other during an incident. Because communications always has been a priority, we have available to us the Regional Communications and Coordination System (RICCS), Reverse 911, Washington Area Wide Alert System (WAWAS) as well as other tools to enhance interoperable communications. Public information officers in the region also developed a virtual joint information system that can be used during emergencies.

Citizen Preparedness and cooperation during emergencies is a priority in the region. Our local governments launched a preparedness campaign last fall that was funded with UASI dollars, and such campaigns will be supported continually.

There have been exercises using some of these systems and there are more to come. In addition, we have planned for and purchased equipment to integrate our Emergency Operations Centers; we have purchased personal protective equipment, and ambulance patient buses for mass casualty events.

Our immediate priority has been to purchase the operational equipment that will make an immediate difference during a man-made or natural disaster. Local funds supported 95% of this effort because we are serious about our obligation to protect our citizens.

We believe the work we have done makes the NCR better prepared and is a model for the nation. We are here to brief, discuss and demonstrate that we are ready to respond to meet the needs of our citizens 24/7. We look forward to your questions.

## Recap of October 2005 Briefing

### *Who's in Charge?*

Local jurisdictions generally operate the same on a day-to-day basis as they do during emergency situations. Local Emergency Operation Plans outline the areas of responsibility for local agencies when responding to disasters or large-scale emergency situations. These plans assign broad responsibilities such as disaster mitigation, preparedness, response, and recovery, to local government agencies and support organizations. These responsibilities are generally extensions of normal or routine functions involving the same personnel and material resources. This means that if you are in charge of communications on a day-to-day basis, then you are in charge of communications during an emergency event.

The National Incident Management System, also known as NIMS, provides a consistent nationwide approach for federal, state, tribal, and local governments to work effectively and efficiently together to prepare for and respond to emergencies of all types.

NIMS is not only about response – it is also about preparedness, prevention, recovery and mitigation. Local jurisdictions of the National Capital Region are formally adopting NIMS in order to meet requirements outlined in the National Response Plan and Presidential Directives. Several local jurisdictions in the region have hired NIMS Compliance Officers to ensure that they meet DHS deadlines.

All emergency responses begin at the local level. However, when a local jurisdiction determines that it no longer has adequate resources to manage the event, the locality can request assistance from other localities through our mutual aid network or from the state. Once the state has been notified and provides assistance, if it no longer has adequate resources to manage the event, the state contacts the federal government for assistance that is coordinated by the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) in DHS.

Should the region need military support, the Joint Force Headquarters-National Capital Region was established to plan and coordinate for homeland defense and civil support operations. The COG CAO committee is working closely with Major General Guy Swan, commander of both the Military District of Washington and the Joint Force Headquarters-National Capital Region. The National Capital Region is the only region in the country that has this level of military support in place prior to a disaster. Last month, representatives from the region participated in a Civic Leader Tour organized by Northern Command where they learned about changes being made by the Department of Defense to be even more responsive to the needs of local authorities in disaster situations. The region also continues to coordinate with the U.S. Department of Homeland Security's Office of National Capital Region Coordination. Both of these federal offices will help ensure a timely response by the federal government to requests for assistance.

### ***Risk-Based Evacuation***

Local jurisdictions in the National Capital Region have long discussed the complex issue of evacuation planning. We were partners in the development and continued review of the COG Regional Emergency Coordination Plan, and in 2004, we completed a Regional Emergency Evacuation Transportation Coordination Annex to the plan. The annex is a guide for how the region's transportation agencies will coordinate with one another in regional incidents. The region is also establishing a regional transportation coordination program, similar to the TRANSCOM organization in the New York-New Jersey-Connecticut metropolitan area. It will connect the state transportation departments in the District of Columbia, Maryland and Virginia and enable them to share information during all types of emergencies, from major traffic accidents to a potential terrorist attack.

Local officials work with their state DOTs to review current plans and scenarios. During an emergency evacuation, options could be implemented such as special emergency traffic signal timing plans or having law enforcement manage critical intersections to improve traffic flow. The Northern Virginia Transportation Commission conducts regular exercises for regional transportation carriers where they discuss different emergency scenarios. And WMATA sponsors frequent meetings with local transit providers to discuss various transportation matters.

It is important to note that for the majority of emergencies, a full-scale evacuation would be unlikely, especially in a large metropolitan region of 5 million people. Most likely, the evacuation would be in a selected area or would be staged or staggered. For most emergencies, we would direct residents to stay put unless told otherwise in order to keep roads open for those with the greatest need. Because of this, we have informed residents through public outreach campaigns to have emergency preparedness kits with adequate supplies of water, food, medicine, and other items. Local officials are also reviewing their emergency response plans to special-needs populations, such as the disabled, elderly, and those without means of transportation.

### ***Interoperable Communications***

The National Capital Region has communications systems in place, with an array of tools to better communicate at all levels of government and to the public. For example, we have available a cache of 800 MHz radios, WEB EOC, Reverse 911, RICCS, Text Alerts, Satellite Phones, and the National Guard Emergency Communications Systems. These interoperable communications enhancements have improved coordination between first responders in the field and command personnel.

Most local jurisdictions in the region are on the 800 MHz Communications System, which enhances regional interoperability significantly. And those that are not on 800 MHz have technology that allows them to communicate with their regional partners. There are a total of 1,250 portable 800 MHz radios available to the region's first responders. Fairfax County maintains 500 radios, Montgomery County maintains 500 radios, and District of Columbia maintains 250 radios for first responder use. The radio cache is an example of how the region is using federal funding through the Urban Area Security Initiative.

The RICCS is an important regional communication tool for critical decision makers and key stake holders. Since its creation in 2002, over 2,000 messages have been sent by area officials

through the RICCS system. RICCS notifies key regional personnel of a crisis or emergency and has been used successfully during major events like Hurricane Isabel and the sniper shootings.

Another interoperability priority for the region has been the connection of local jurisdictions' emergency operations centers. Once completed, emergency managers will be connected on a broadband, wireless infrastructure along with a web based incident management tracking system. Satellite phones and National Guard capacity emergency communications systems provide redundancy or backup for other systems. Text alert networks provide local jurisdictions with a means to send notifications and emergency alerts to residents via e-mail, cell phone and pager. Regional officials are also working on communications tools like Reverse 911, which will enable jurisdictions to call out to residents with instructions and alerts during an event specific to their neighborhood or ZIP code.

## Where are we?

### *Regional Assessment Using National Standards*

In 2004, leaders in the National Capital Region decided to use the Emergency Management Accreditation Program's standards and accreditation process to assess the region's emergency management capabilities. The EMAP process, which consists of a self-assessment, documentation, verified peer assessment, and a written report of strengths and areas for improvement, is the first assessment of a regional area using national standards.

The Emergency Management Accreditation Program (EMAP) standards include 58 standards covering 15 program areas, from hazard identification and risk assessment, through resource management, planning, and training and exercises. The standards detail the preparedness activities and response capabilities that the region needs, and they will help benchmark progress. The regional pilot project will enable the region to identify gaps and prioritize projects.

### *Reviews of Preparedness Projects Underway*

The National Capital Region greatly appreciates the UASI funding that it has received from Congress in the past three years. In FY03, the region received a total of \$60.5M in UASI funds and 100% of those funds are obligated. The funds were used to support 40 initiatives, including the 800 MHz portable radio cache, hospital surge capacity, and a citizen education campaign. In FY04, the NCR was provided \$31.9M in UASI funds and 97% of those funds are obligated. They were used to fund 45 initiatives in the region, including an interoperability project, an EMS initiative, and a water security program, which is recognized as a national model. It includes an early warning monitoring system— a network of 16 biological and chemical stations now in place at strategic locations in the NCR to detect and rapidly respond to contamination events.

In FY05, the region was provided \$77.5M in UASI funds and 90% of those funds are currently obligated. These funds were used to fund 71 initiatives in the NCR that included an automated fingerprint identification system, a regional interoperability project, and a credentialing project. These funds have contributed to enhanced readiness throughout the region.

### *Lessons Learned from Katrina*

When Hurricane Katrina devastated the Gulf Coast Region last year, its impact was felt throughout the nation, including the National Capital Region. Over 5,000 evacuees relocated to this area, and the sudden influx of people required emergency managers, human services providers, and other regional officials to collaborate closely with one another. Through COG, local emergency managers held a series of conference calls to discuss the status of evacuees in their localities and the protocols for offering social services to them. And local governments and citizens of metropolitan Washington donated a great deal of money, supplies and manpower to rescue and relief efforts in Louisiana, Mississippi, and Alabama.

Following the storm, federal, state and local officials have been reviewing lessons learned and updating their emergency plans. Katrina prompted area officials in this region to ask the Council of Governments to help them review and improve upon local and regional emergency plans since the 9/11 attacks. Local governments are now updating emergency plans to better respond to disabled, elderly and low-income citizens. They are also approving new mutual aid legislation to improve coordination among first responders from different jurisdictions in the region.

### *Regional Status as of September 23 as reported by Capital Area Red Cross*

	Cases	Persons
Alexandria	104	192
Arlington	123	225
Armory DC	398	387
Armed Forces Retirement Home	313	320
DC	432	695
Fairfax	493	997
Loudon	188	439
Montgomery	376	896
Prince Georges	416	669
Prince Williams	153	327
<b>Total</b>	<b><u>2996</u></b>	<b><u>5147</u></b>

### Where are we going?

#### *Training & Exercises*

Since September 11, first responders, elected officials, and other area decision makers in the public and private sector have been active in staging exercises and participating in training sessions in order to be better prepared for major regional emergencies. Public information officers have participated in crisis communications workshops and have been trained to use the region's Virtual Joint Information Center. Health officials and water managers have taken communication training. Senior leaders in the region have met to discuss emergency response and coordination. One of the largest regional exercises, the Command Post Exercise of September 2004, included hundreds of key area officials and planners with vivid emergency scenarios to test the region's response. For 2006, a contract was recently approved to fund this year's exercises in coordination with the region's Exercise Training Operations Panel (ETOP) working group. Another large-scale, region-wide exercise is planned for the fall of this year.

Once exercises occur, emergency managers generally serve as the lead in initiating and reviewing after action reports to identify any problems or needs that should be addressed.

In addition to regional training events, local jurisdictions conduct the majority of exercises to ensure that first responders are prepared to respond to a variety of emergencies. There have also been a number of exercises spearheaded at the federal level that have involved first responders of local jurisdictions. Volunteer citizens have also participated in training events through the Citizen Corps program in groups like the Community Emergency Response Teams (CERT).

### *Citizen Awareness*

Citizen preparedness and cooperation during an emergency cannot be understated. It is the responsibility of area officials and public information officers to continue educating the public on personal preparedness, and to restore the public's faith that their governments are prepared to respond to an emergency. Families need to make emergency plans that include important contact numbers and meeting places. They should also be stocked with supplies such as three days of water, extra batteries for radios and flashlights, and a first aid kit with important medications.

To get this message out, local governments of the National Capital Region launched a citizen preparedness campaign last fall. The campaign—titled “Be Ready, Make a Plan”—was designed specially for the region and funded with UASI dollars. It used both media advertising and grassroots community outreach to reach the public during a one-month campaign blitz. And after the campaign ended, public information officers continued to distribute “Be Ready, Make a Plan” materials and information and scheduled media appearances for local officials to continue conveying its message.

Members of the public have also been active in Citizen Corps programs including Neighborhood Watch, Volunteers in Police Service, Medical Reserve Corps (MRC), and Community Emergency Response Teams (CERT).

### *Continuous Planning/Target Capabilities/Resources*

On December 1, 2005, the NCR was informed that the Department of Homeland Security would be using the National Preparedness Goal as the framework for the Homeland Security Grant Program, starting with FY06. DHS identified eight of 37 priority Target Capabilities for FY06 UASI funding and the NCR, guided by the NCR Homeland Security Strategic Plan, identified an additional six priority Target Capabilities for a total of 14.

On January 9-11, 2006, area representatives of the NCR held the Homeland Security Target Capabilities Workshop to assess the region's current homeland security program and future program needs in each of the 14 identified target capabilities. During the review sessions, the NCR representatives identified strengths and weaknesses to determine if they would meet the desired outcomes of the DHS Target Capabilities. The representatives then identified resources need to meet or maintain the DHS Target Capabilities.

The responses from the representatives were consolidated, presented, and served as a

basis for development of Concept Papers and Initiative Plans, which identified over \$300 million of need to strengthen these 14 capabilities in the NCR.

The state and local leadership of the region reviewed the outputs of this process and developed an application that included a funding request for nearly \$200 million in FY06 UASI funds. We are currently undertaking a further prioritization process in the event that the amount of funding awarded to the region by DHS, which it is allocating on the basis of risk and need, is less than requested.

Although the foundation of preparedness in the region is funded by local dollars, the jurisdictions of the NCR always seek to leverage supplemental funding opportunities, including the DHS grant programs.

Thank you for your support and the opportunity to provide continuous updates as to the status of preparedness in the NCR.