

STATEMENT

OF

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BEFORE
THE

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U.S. SENATE
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**“LESSONS LEARNED FROM THE BOSTON MARATHON BOMBINGS: PREPARING
FOR AND RESPONDING TO THE ATTACK”**

Submitted
By

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Introduction

Chairman Carper, Ranking Member Coburn, and Members of the Committee: Good morning. I am Richard Serino, the Deputy Administrator for the U.S. Department of Homeland Security's (DHS) Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA). On behalf of Secretary Napolitano and Administrator Fugate, thank you for the opportunity to discuss the Boston Marathon bombing. I was in Boston on that tragic day in April celebrating Patriot's Day in my hometown, and I am here now not just as FEMA's Deputy Administrator, but also as a Bostonian and a former paramedic.

Patriot's Day and the Boston Marathon come together to create a day like no other in our region. We pause to celebrate our heritage, our streets fill with millions of residents and visitors from down the block and around the world, and the city shines. For most of my life, I worked those same streets for Boston EMS, ending a 36-year career as chief of the department in 2009.

There were many nights I went home proud of the men and women of Boston EMS, but I was never more proud of them, and the residents of my town, than I was on April 15th. While in one moment we saw terror and brutality, in the next we saw our community's love and compassion. We saw our Emergency Medical Technicians, paramedics, police officers, and firefighters spring into action and perform their jobs professionally and heroically.

They weren't the only first responders, though. Bystanders and marathon volunteers, regular people given the chance to run, decided instead to stay and help the professional responders do their jobs. Some comforted victims, urging them to hold on and reassuring them that help was on the way. Some helped carry victims to the medical tent for triage. Some did more by helping to control bleeding, in some cases using their own clothes as tourniquets to stop life-threatening blood loss.

It was an amazing example of humanity, service and teamwork.

For years, responders in Boston, as in other cities, have used large public events as an opportunity to train, anticipating and preparing for mass casualties in case something goes wrong. A number of high-profile events over the past few years have offered Boston's medical community a chance to hone their plans and skills in managing public events. At FEMA, we work with communities across the country to prepare for a variety of scenarios. All disasters are local, but we're proud to be there to support communities across America as they prepare for, protect against, respond to, recover from and mitigate against whatever hazard they may face.

As the medical incident commander in Boston for more than 35 mass casualty incidents and for all of Boston's major planned events, including the Boston Marathon, I can tell you that the fact that the response was so well executed wasn't an accident – it was a result of years of planning and coordination. It was no accident that not a single hospital in the city was overwhelmed with patients in the aftermath of the bombings. It was no accident that patients were appropriately

triaged and transported in an orderly manner to the appropriate hospital based on their needs. And it was no accident that a Medical Intelligence Center was fully staffed and operating on race day to keep track of patients, coordinate resources and share information with the medical community throughout the region. All of these are tangible results of disaster planning that has gone on in Boston for more than 20 years. I'm here today to discuss, in part, how FEMA played an important role in making the people on the ground more prepared for that day.

The Role of the National Preparedness System in the Whole Community

On April 15, Americans witnessed the strength of the whole community – people coming together to help each other and making our collective response that much more effective and efficient. Whole Community is an approach to emergency management that reinforces the notion that we must leverage all of the resources of our collective team at every level of government to prevent, prepare for, protect against, respond to, and recover from, all hazards; and that collectively we must meet the needs of the entire community in each of these areas. This larger collective emergency management team includes, state, local, tribal, and territorial partners as well as non-governmental organizations like faith-based and non-profit groups, the private sector, individuals, families and communities, who continue to be the nation's most important assets as first responders during a disaster.

This incident also demonstrated how FEMA's approach to National Preparedness helped to empower and strengthen the whole community, by giving its members the right tools and information they needed to be prepared. The National Preparedness System (NPS) is the instrument that the Nation employs to build, sustain, and deliver the core capabilities that work toward the National Preparedness Goal. FEMA requires grantees – which include both the Commonwealth of Massachusetts and the City of Boston – to implement the NPS and establish a whole community approach to homeland security and emergency management, making them more prepared should an event like this occur. As a result of the NPS, the whole community plans better, organizes better, equips better, trains better, and exercises better, resulting in improved national preparedness and resilience. And this was evident in Boston.

FEMA is proud to be a part of this collaborative, whole community approach to preparedness. Our preparedness programs – including our training and exercise programs, technical assistance programs and community preparedness programs – that were implemented in coordination with Massachusetts and Boston had a positive impact on the City of Boston, on the Commonwealth of Massachusetts and the survivors of this tragic day. That day also demonstrated local and national capabilities to respond to hazards. Immediately following the event, FEMA, as part of the whole community, collaborated with our law enforcement, public safety and federal partners to provide expertise and were ready to help when the President issued a disaster declaration for the affected communities. Indeed, the events in Boston have highlighted how close coordination among federal, state, and local officials is critical in the immediate aftermath and response to terrorist attacks.

Both the work leading up to the Boston Marathon, as well as the quick action following the event, highlight the significant progress that we, as a nation, have made over the past ten years in responding to acts of terrorism. But there is still more to do and we are continuing to learn from this event and others to strengthen our preparedness, training and exercises programs as they relate to mass casualty and active shooter situations.

Homeland Security Grant Programs

FEMA works with cities around the country to assess gaps and prioritize grant investments. In 2012, Boston completed a Threat and Hazard Identification and Risk Assessment (THIRA), a process for assessing regional capability gaps required annually by each State and urban area designed to prioritize investments in key deployable capabilities. Fifty-six states and urban areas, including Boston, identified complex attacks as one of their top threats/hazards in their 2012 THIRAs. These assessments assist States and urban areas planning and preparing for various scenarios, prioritizing the development of capabilities to address known and evolving threats.

Many of the capabilities demonstrated in Boston and in the immediate aftermath of the bombings were built or enhanced – and have been sustained – through the preparedness suite of Homeland Security Grant Programs (HSGP), including the Urban Areas Security Initiative (UASI) Grant Program and the State Homeland Security Program (SHSP). Since 2002, the Commonwealth of Massachusetts has received more than \$943 million in FEMA preparedness grant funds. Since 2003, Boston has received more than \$369 million through eight grant programs, including \$179 million through Urban Area Security Initiative (UASI) grants.

As a former paramedic and chief, I can attest to the importance of preparing our public safety and medical personnel for whatever may come. FEMA grant funds provided commodities and training that were essential in response to the explosions. Both Massachusetts and Boston invested state, local and federal grant funds in systems that were critical during the response including the stand-up of an Emergency Patient Tracking System, which is a secure, web-based application that facilitates incident management, family reunification, and overall patient accountability during emergency incidents. This system made a difference on April 15, as it helped ensure that not a single hospital in the city was overwhelmed with patients in the aftermath of the bombings. In part because of the investment made in that system, and in no small part of the outstanding work of our first responders, patients were triaged and transported in an orderly manner to the appropriate hospital based on their needs.

The FY 2009-2011 HSGP grant, administered in partnership with the Department of Health and Human Services (HHS), provided commodities and training that aided in response to the explosions. The Boston Public Health Commission (BPHC) invested \$200,000 in Mass Casualty Incident (MCI) medical supplies and equipment. These provisions, available on the special operations vehicles at the Marathon, were crucial in responding to the bombing survivors.

BPHC has also used more than \$920,000 in grant funds for first responder safety, including to purchase equipment and supplies such as personal protective equipment and radiation dosimeters for first responders. The grant funds also provided for planning and coordination, authorizing salaries for staff that work on medical surge planning projects such as patient tracking and health and medical services coordination. These capabilities were particularly essential in ensuring a coordinated and successful response and recovery operation following the blasts.

More than \$275,000 was used previously to fund mass casualty incident training, education and exercises for first responders. In 2003, the Boston EMS utilized funding to pilot a training and exercise program, which later became the DelValle Institute for Emergency Preparedness. This Institute has trained tens of thousands of first responders and first receivers. In March 2013, grant funds were used to coordinate a psychological first aid course for first responders providing pre-hospital medical care. The skills learned through this course proved to be invaluable for Boston EMS and their peers when responding to the explosions at the Boston Marathon.

The approach taken by both Boston and Massachusetts is considered a best practice for other states and urban areas looking to effectively use grant dollars, while prioritizing threats and developing critical capabilities.

Quite simply, our preparedness system worked that day like it should: we invested in local and state resources, those resources were not overwhelmed the day of the event and local and state resources were able to effectively respond. This shows the efficacy of our programs and demonstrates our return on investment.

To support that argument, I'd like to discuss how FEMA guidance served as the basis for our collective response. First responders in Boston used the National Incident Management System and the National Response Framework to exercise before the event. Agencies and organizations involved adopted the Incident Command System (ICS)¹, conducted planning and operations using unified command, and integrated aspects of the region's disaster plans into the event's operations plan.

As part of the FEMA grant program, the region – consisting of Massachusetts, New Hampshire, Rhode Island, Boston Urban Area, and Providence Urban Area– completed and exercised a Regional Catastrophic Coordination Plan (RCCP) that facilitates communication, situational awareness, and functional area coordination across the Region in a catastrophic event. UASI investments also helped bolster capabilities that were critical on the ground, supporting the Boston Regional Intelligence Center (BRIC) and their work in bombing-related operations, analysis and investigations led by the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI).

¹ The ICS is a standardized, on-scene, all-hazards incident management approach that allows for the integration of facilities, equipment, personnel, procedures and communications operating within a common organizational structure; enables a coordinated response among various jurisdictions and functional agencies, both public and private and establishes common processes for planning and managing resources.

In addition, FEMA provided funds for equipment that local and state agencies used during the event. For example, the Massachusetts State Police used a forward looking infrared imaging unit purchased with HSGP grants funds to search for, locate and apprehend the surviving bombing suspect. Camera systems that were used during the post-incident investigation were also obtained with UASI funds. Overall, HSGP grants for more than \$3 million have been used for screening, search and detection. Additionally, more than \$7 million in UASI grants have been leveraged for on-site security and protection, including much of the equipment that was used during the event, such as: bomb robots, x-ray equipment, and ballistic helmets and vests.

Operational communications have also been bolstered, with nearly \$15 million in funding through UASI grants going toward such enhancements as the addition of frequencies to support the regional mutual aid radio systems, which include law enforcement, fire service and EMS.

Preparedness: Training Exercises and Technical Assistance

First responders from across the country plan, train and exercise through support from FEMA, making them more equipped to serve their communities during real world incidents. Training, exercising and planning are extremely valuable to prepare for real world incidents because they help teach new skills, promote continuous improvement and develop relationships before they are relied upon in a crisis. Since 2000, more than 5,500 Boston area responders have received training through FEMA partners including the National Domestic Preparedness Consortium (NDPC) and Continuing Training Grantees. During that same period, FEMA's Center for Domestic Preparedness (CDP) has provided Chemical/Biological and mass casualty training to more than 500 Boston responders and providers.

FEMA has supported twelve exercises directly involving the City of Boston. These have included topics as diverse as chemical or biological attacks, hurricane preparedness, hazardous materials events, cyber and improvised explosive devices (IEDs). In 2011, DHS – in conjunction with the FBI and the National Counterterrorism Center – hosted a Joint Counterterrorism Awareness Workshop that focused on integrating response operations to a complex attack in the Boston metropolitan area. More than 200 participants from the local, state, and Federal community participated in the workshop.

As part of FEMA's Regional Catastrophic Preparedness Grant Program, the Metro Boston Homeland Security Region (MBHSR) in 2012 exercised a Regional Catastrophic Coordination Plan designed to augment existing operations plans by facilitating communication, situational awareness, and functional area coordination across the region in a catastrophic event. The region also developed a Regional IED Annex using DHS grant funding in 2010, creating coordinated response protocols for State and local agencies to respond to a catastrophic IED incident and codifying the structure of explosive ordnance teams within the region when collaborating on multiple IED scenarios.

Boston also used UASI funds to train SWAT teams to better integrate bomb technicians into tactical operations, a crucial capability that was demonstrated in the aftermath of the Marathon bombings.

Additionally, the Boston Marathon was evaluated by the interagency Special Events Working Group (SEWG), which is managed by the DHS Office of Operations Coordination and Planning, and was determined to be a high risk event. This determination resulted in enhanced attention to the event across the federal family and assured a greater level of situational awareness and coordination of federal resources dedicated to the event. Through our interagency relationships and established special event processes, DHS was positioned to respond very quickly to the needs of our state and local partners. This preparation was instrumental to the rapid federal response to the Boston Marathon bombing incident.

More than \$6 million in UASI grants have been used to fund the National Incident Management System Training, and these exercises allow key personnel to develop critical relationships. As the saying goes, you never want to “exchange business cards” at the scene of a disaster – it is better to know the people you will be working with beforehand. We are training responders for mass casualty response and recovery, explosive devices, medical response, hospital incident command systems, crime scene management, hazardous evidence collection and law enforcement response to bombing incidents with the CDP and NDPC.

DHS technical assistance and funding enabled the City of Boston to codify its emergency response plans and protocols through planning support initiatives. Since 2005, FEMA has provided five technical assistance deliveries for the Boston urban area and seven for the Commonwealth of Massachusetts, including assistance with IED awareness, fusion centers, equipment, anti-terrorism training, and interoperable communications. Further, NPPD/OEC has worked closely with jurisdictions in the MBHSR to improve coordination, training and tactical planning for emergency communications.

Incident Response

As this Committee is aware, FEMA’s mission includes response to acts of terrorism and we take that charge very seriously. To ensure that our response is as quick and effective as it can be, FEMA pre-positions teams at or near major events in case of emergency. Before this year’s Boston Marathon, FEMA participated in Boston Marathon Security Coordination meetings with other federal, state and local partners including: DHS’s National Protection and Programs Directorate’s (NPPD) Federal Protective Service (FPS); the Massachusetts Homeland Security Advisor; the Commonwealth Fusion Center/Massachusetts State Police Counter-Intelligence Unit; the BRIC; and the FBI/Joint Terrorism Task Force (JTTF). While intelligence reporting indicated no credible threat to the event, its designation as a Special Events Assessment Rating (SEAR) 2 by the Special Events Working Group meant there were Federal, State, and local security and logistical support resources on hand. The FBI was designated the event’s lead

Federal law enforcement agency and the Massachusetts State Police was the designated lead local law enforcement and public safety organization. The Massachusetts Emergency Operations Center (EOC) was the designated operations center for the event.

Leading up to the event, the DHS Massachusetts Protective Security Advisor (PSA) as well as representatives from FEMA, and NPPD's Federal Protective Service (FPS) participated in Boston Marathon Security Coordination meetings alongside the Boston Athletic Association, the Massachusetts Homeland Security Advisor, the Commonwealth Fusion Center/Massachusetts State Police Counter-Intelligence Unit, the Boston Regional Intelligence Center, and the FBI/JTTF. The Massachusetts PSA worked directly with owners and operators of critical infrastructure to identify facilities in proximity to the event. Engagement included documenting protective measures, reviewing past assessments, providing local and State partners with map books of all critical infrastructure and chemical facilities in close proximity to the marathon route, and monitoring infrastructure for changes in posture on a real-time basis.

FEMA was on alert in preparation for the event, activating Region I's Regional Response Coordination Center (RRCC) and the Region's Incident Management Assistance Team (IMAT).² Following the blasts and initial response, FEMA activated its RRCC, which was already setup in Boston and served as our base of operations. From there, we were able to monitor the response operations and contact federal and Massachusetts emergency management partners to offer FEMA's support. We also brought partners from the Department of Transportation, HHS, the Environmental Protection Agency, the U.S. Coast Guard, Massachusetts National Guard, urban search and rescue and federal law enforcement to the RRCC to support survivors.

Our Regional IMAT relocated from the Joint Field Office in Portsmouth, New Hampshire to FEMA's Region I RRCC, located at the Mobile Emergency Response Support Operations Center in Maynard, Massachusetts about 30 miles from Boston. We also collaborated and sent resources to our partners, dispatching liaison officers (LNOs) to the FBI command post and the JTTF. Region I was also activated to a Level II (Partial Activation) with select Emergency Support Functions, Defense Coordinating Element and an American Red Cross LNO.

FEMA monitored the situation from our headquarters in Washington, D.C., coordinating with other agencies at the National Watch Center (NWC), which coordinates closely with the DHS National Operations Center for national-level information sharing, situational awareness, and common operating picture. The NWC was activated to Enhanced Watch to include the NWC Threat Monitoring Team and additional personnel were advised of the potential for a deployment. Our National IMAT White was also placed on alert.

² IMATs are full-time, rapid-response teams with dedicated staff able to deploy within two hours and arrive at an incident within twelve hours. They support the local incident commander in establishing a unified command and provide situational awareness for federal and state decision-makers. IMATs were available to officials on the ground that day, in addition to a FEMA Liaison Officer (LNO).

As I have said and firmly believe, all disasters are local and this event was no exception. Accordingly, FEMA's true role is to be available if duty calls and to assist local and state governments should they need us. In essence, FEMA is part of a response system that relies on the collective strength and bravery of the entire nation – both its people and its assets.

Immediate Aftermath and Recovery

Two days after the bombing, President Obama issued an Emergency Declaration for Massachusetts to “alleviate the hardship and suffering caused by the emergency on the local population, and to provide appropriate assistance for required emergency measures, authorized under Title V of the Stafford Act, to save lives and to protect property and public health and safety, and to lessen or avert the threat of a catastrophe in the counties of Middlesex, Norfolk, and Suffolk.” This declaration authorized FEMA to identify, mobilize and provide equipment and resources necessary to alleviate the impacts of the emergency. FEMA was authorized to provide Category B emergency protective measures to include items such as police personnel, search and rescue, and removal of health and safety hazards. FEMA also provided Public Assistance to include funding for shelters and emergency care for Norfolk and Suffolk counties, which was primarily used for residents whose homes had been impacted during the blast or could benefit from crisis counseling. That assistance was provided with 75 percent federal funding.

Additionally, FEMA authorized state and local agencies in Massachusetts to use existing preparedness grant funding to support law enforcement and first responder overtime costs resulting from investigation support activities or heightened security measures, from April 15, 2013 through May 5, 2013. FEMA granted a similar authorization for state and local agencies hosting major special events scheduled during this timeframe.

Maximizing Existing Strengths While Looking Forward

FEMA prides itself on learning from every event and continually improving its approach. With that in mind, we are focused on further strengthening our collective preparedness to meet evolving threats, including how we respond to active shooters and mass casualty events. Looking forward, FEMA has also requested more than \$2 million in the FY 2014 Budget for State and Local Programs to conduct approximately 75 course offerings and table-top exercises to bring together over 3,000 community leaders, planners, and staff from schools, institutions of higher education, and places of worship in an effort to make their communities and institutions more secure and resilient.

In terms of mass casualty and active shooter training, several states and urban areas identified complex attacks as one of their top threats and hazards in their Threat and Hazard Identification and Risk Assessment (THIRA). Accordingly, FEMA is planning to increase training opportunities in active shooter, mass casualty, and counterterrorism awareness. FEMA also has surveyed the NDPC and CDP offerings with respect to mass casualty incidents to examine how we can continue to improve those courses.

Ensuring adequate funding through state and local grants is also important.

In recognition of the substantial impact mass casualty events have on families, communities, and state, local and regional first responder agencies and public/private medical service providers, FY 2013 SHSP and UASI grantees are encouraged to apply funding in support of efforts to improve mass casualty care capabilities with a specific focus on providing immediate emergency care to victims of mass casualty events, including mass shootings.

This priority may be achieved by:

- Engaging in mass casualty planning, training, and exercises specifically involving law enforcement, fire service, and EMS providers to rapidly deploy into areas that have been cleared but not secured in order to initiate treatment at or near the point of injury and effect rescue of survivors. Plans, training and exercises must include strategies that ensure the health and safety of first responders and citizen responders, and training associated with the prevention and detection of secondary attacks;
- Improving coordination between law enforcement, fire service, EMS systems, other first responder agencies, and local healthcare delivery and trauma systems to improve victim triage, treatment and transport, to ensure patients are distributed to appropriate levels of definitive emergency care; and
- Establishing protocols on the medical principles of tactical emergency casualty care and conducting training for responders. Empowering community bystanders through public education initiatives and training about life sustaining actions and how they can support survivors and providers in a mass casualty event.

We are also developing new curriculum through FEMA's Continuing Training Grant program that focuses on awareness training for first responders. Specifically, it will focus on how to gather and recover information during a crisis, "care under fire" when medical personnel are overwhelmed or unable to access a crisis site, public messaging to provide quick information to the public, and interoperable communication needed from tactical teams and incident commands. The overall goal of this curriculum is to provide responders and private sector partners with a better understanding of the challenges associated with multi-jurisdictional interdiction and response, planning protocols and tools, and command, control and communications in a dynamic, complex attack.

As we look to further strengthen our ability to prepare for events, the President's FY 2014 Budget proposes to reform the grant programs and establish a National Preparedness Grant Program (NPGP). The proposed NPGP would consolidate current State and local preparedness grant programs into one overarching program (excluding EMPG and Assistance to Firefighters Grants programs) to enable grantees to collaboratively build and sustain core capabilities toward achieving the National Preparedness Goal.

By encouraging collaboration among disciplines and across all levels of government, grantees can work together to collectively prioritize needs and allocate increasingly scarce grant dollars where they would have the greatest impact. The Program would focus on developing and sustaining the core capabilities – as identified and defined in the National Preparedness Goal – necessary to prevent, protect against, mitigate, respond to, and recover from events that pose the greatest risks to the United States.

Implementing the NPGP would also improve the efficiency of the grant programs by eliminating the burden on grantees to meet mandates from multiple individual grant programs. As the Committee is aware, the Redundancy Elimination and Enhanced Performance for Preparedness Grants Act identified the elimination of duplicative mandates as a priority. This process, and the creation of NPGP, will ensure that grantees have the ability to build and sustain capabilities that can be deployed not just on the local level, but on the regional and national levels as well – creating an interconnected network of local, state, regional and national capabilities to increase the security of the nation. We look forward to working with this Committee toward that end.

Conclusion

The events in Boston have highlighted how close coordination among Federal, State, and local officials is critical in the immediate aftermath and response to terrorist attacks and reinforces the principle and value of whole community contributions, including from the general public. Both the work leading up to the Boston Marathon, as well as the quick action following the event, demonstrate the significant progress that has been made over the past ten years.

Although we will never forget those whose lives were lost, as a community we can take some solace that our preparedness efforts helped saved lives. At FEMA, we often stress that there is no one agency or entity responsible for emergency response. It takes a whole community of emergency responders to prepare for disasters and save lives. I have never been so proud to be a part of the Boston community as I was on April 15. We owe it to those who we lost and to those who were injured that day to keep improving – and we will work with all of our partners across this great country to honor that moving forward.