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San Mateo County Board of Supervisors**

**Remarks before the  
Subcommittee on National Security, Emerging Threats, and International Relations  
Field Hearing: Homeland Security: Surveillance and Monitoring  
of Explosive Storage Facilities**

**Monday, August 2, 2004  
San Mateo City Council Chambers  
330 West 20<sup>th</sup> Avenue, San Mateo, California**

On behalf of the County of San Mateo, I would like to thank Representative Shays, Representative Lantos and the other members of the Subcommittee on National Security, Emerging Threats, and International Relations of the United States House of Representatives for this opportunity to address the Subcommittee on important issues of both local and national concern related to the surveillance and monitoring of explosive storage facilities and homeland security.

I first want to state that I agree with Chairman Shays' statement that the "physical security of publicly owned explosive material storage facilities is crucial because of the potential for catastrophic damage should these facilities be successfully penetrated." I believe that the threat posed by possible theft of, or sabotage to, such facilities presents a problem of national proportions, and that leadership, coordination and assistance at the national level are essential to appropriately address this threat.

Those of us here in San Mateo County especially want to thank Representative Lantos for making this hearing possible and for his leadership on this issue. We are also indebted to Representative Anna Eshoo for bringing to the attention of Secretary Tom Ridge of the Department of Homeland Security and this Subcommittee the challenges that local governments, such as San Mateo County, face in improving security for explosive storage facilities. In a recent letter to Secretary Ridge, Representative Eshoo pointed out that inadequate first responder funding and misallocation of Homeland Security funds were important factors in the recent theft of government-owned explosives from a storage bunker located on San Francisco Public Utility Commission property, in San Mateo County. While this incident was unfortunate, it highlights how important it is for the federal government to assume an appropriate role in assisting local agencies to protect their communities and the Nation.

Among the support that would greatly enhance readiness at the local level would be federal assistance in assessing and identifying the threats posed to explosive storage and chemical facilities. Local governments simply lack the resources to carry out these functions, especially given the national and international scope of the potential threat. Along similar lines, federal assistance and coordination in the sharing and dissemination of threat information is absolutely critical and of utmost importance.

The State Fire Marshal has promulgated regulations to address the storage of explosives in California. *See, generally*, Cal. Code Regs., tit. 19, §§ 1566, et seq. While these regulations set physical standards for explosive storage facilities, they were adopted long before the present threat environment emerged and they do not reflect current risks to these facilities. Further, to the extent that federal regulations address explosives storage, much more needs to be done to increase the coordination between federal agencies and operators of local ammunition storage facilities. The federal government, with its much greater knowledge of how risks to explosive storage facilities affect Homeland Security, must work with local agencies to continue developing appropriate standards at the national level for security of explosive storage facilities. Once such standards are developed, it will be equally important for the federal government to provide local agencies with the resources necessary to implement them.

Explosive storage facilities generally contain explosives used or confiscated by law enforcement agencies, and it is no secret that local governments' law enforcement and first responder assets have been stretched thin due to the recent budget crisis in this State (as well as in other parts of the country). This fact makes federal Homeland Security Assistance, such as through the State Homeland Security Grant Program, more critical than ever.

We believe that a number of improvements could be made to the Homeland Security Grant Program that would make the program more effective and responsive to threats at the local level. First, a greater degree of flexibility with respect to the use of funds provided through the Program would assist local agencies as they prioritize their Homeland security spending. Further, a streamlined application process which would allow local agencies to apply directly to the Department of Homeland Security for grants and deal directly and expeditiously with the Department on inquiries related to grants (rather than through the State, as is currently the case), would greatly increase local law enforcement and first responder effectiveness.

In fact, included in the recommendations made by the 9/11 Commission is to “– *base federal funding for emergency preparedness solely on risks and vulnerabilities, putting New York City and Washington, D.C., at the top of the current list. Such assistance should not remain a program for general revenue sharing or pork-barrel spending.*” Realistic assessment of homeland security vulnerabilities must be the number one priority. As you can see by the analysis of the current homeland security grant allocations attached to my testimony, Wyoming receives grant funding of nearly \$38 per capita (the single largest amount per capita of all the states), whereas California receives \$5.03 per capita, ranking the state dead last. This skewed allocation demonstrates the need to change the current homeland security allocation formula.

The 9/11 Commission's final report further recommends that homeland security funding be contingent on the adoption of an incident command system to strengthen regional teamwork in a crisis. San Mateo County's Office of Emergency Services operates through a joint power authority (JPA) in which all 22 police and public safety agencies in the County come together to ensure a coordinated, collaborative crisis response. Federal formulas do not reward that level of cooperation. Federal policies often laud collaboration, but the funding rarely follows. I urge you to take that message back to your colleagues. Establish a funding formula that truly rewards collaboration.

Finally, it is essential that federal Homeland Security Grant funding be tied to an assessment of the threats faced by localities and the costs incurred in responding to those threats. In addition to the formulaic allocation, another issue relates to the fact that metropolitan area homeland security funds were allocated last year to urban cities through the Urban Area Security Initiative Program, which included funds for the City and County of San Francisco. And while San Francisco does have vulnerabilities - the Golden Gate Bridge, the Transamerica Building and the Bay Bridge for example, the funding model does not reflect the fact that the San Francisco Bay Area, including San Mateo County, is really one urbanized area with vulnerabilities typical of urban cities. The largest intermodel transportation hub west of St. Louis, for example, is located in San Mateo County, as are other critical infrastructure such as the San Francisco International Airport and the San Francisco Hetch Hetchy watershed - the location of the bunker that brought us all here today. Yet San Mateo County, though it is home to significant economic and public infrastructure, did not receive grant funding targeted to urban cities. This underscores a major flaw in the current allocation methodologies, and the need to ensure that future homeland security funds are allocated based on real threats and allocated to localities that are vulnerable.

Let me say in closing that I believe the single most important lesson learned from 9/11 is the need to improve communication. While the final report of the 9/11 Commission speaks to the need to improve communication among intelligence agencies as paramount, I believe it is equally critical for the federal government agencies to strengthen their ability to communicate clearly with local agencies. This is underscored by our recent experience with shared responsibility for the explosives bunker.

Like you, I found the testimony before the 9/11 Commission troubling and often painful. Resounding, however, was the observation that on the morning of September 11 "the last best hope for the community" rested primarily with first responders: fire, police and emergency medical service professionals. We must ensure that they have the resources, information and flexibility necessary to do their jobs effectively and efficiently.

Thank you again for holding these hearings in San Mateo County and for the opportunity to address this Subcommittee.