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**Hearing Date January 9, 2020**

**Title of Hearing: Homeland Security's Subcommittee on Emergency Preparedness, Response and Communications: Examination of the Department of Homeland Security Preparedness Grants**

Chairman Payne, Ranking Member King and Members of the Committee:

The attacks of September 11, 2001, were defining moments in our attitudes toward terrorism. More than a decade and a half later, people can still recall when they initially heard about or saw footage of the Twin Towers' collapse.

In the wake of this tragedy, the federal government took numerous actions to better prepare our nation for future terrorist attacks.

Among these actions were new legislation and appropriations that committed to using federal grants to bolster state and local capabilities in defense against terrorism threats and close those gaps in national preparedness not filled practically by the federal government.

Two of the most critical grant programs were the State Homeland Security Program (SHSP) and the Urban Areas Security Initiative (UASI). Eighteen years later, both programs remain—a testament to their importance.

Congressional appropriations to the grant programs have diminished over time. Absent information on the return on investment, such as the corresponding contributions invested by states and local governments, these grants remain an easy target for funding cuts.

For example, beginning in fiscal year 2011, SHSP and UASI grants were roughly halved over a two-year period.

Without better information about the contributions of states and localities to increasing terrorism preparedness, federal preparedness grants may face further reductions or elimination.

In 2019, New Jersey received \$36,331,372 in Homeland Security grants.

Included were: \$20,050,000 from the Urban Area Security Initiative (UASI) program to benefit law enforcement terrorism prevention activities in the Newark and Jersey City areas.

\$8,000,000 State Homeland Security Program (SHSP)

\$ 8,281,372 Emergency Management Performance Grants

The UASI grant for Newark/Jersey City resulted in an **11 percent decrease** (\$2,700,000) from fiscal year 2018 funding levels.

The total population associated with the Jersey City/Newark UASI is approximately 4,792,594 which equates to more than half the entire population of the state of New Jersey making this region one of the most densely populated areas in the United States.

In the middle of it all is a section of the NJ Turnpike in Union and Essex counties that runs through what the FBI and government officials from New Jersey have dubbed “the most dangerous two miles in America”.

This area includes the largest port on the East Coast, Newark Airport, major rail lines, densely populated cities and chemical and petroleum refineries all of which create a “target rich environment”.

Cuts to federal programs designed to fight terrorism may mean that some "hard choices" are on the horizon

Law enforcement and emergency preparedness professionals are constantly training, planning, and equipping themselves to respond to the threat of terrorism in our communities.

They rely on UASI grant funding to ensure that New Jersey is a safe place to live, work, and raise families.

Given the wide variety of threats and vulnerabilities that states and major urban areas face, it is not surprising that they have adopted different attitudes toward terrorism preparedness.

Moreover, jurisdictions have had to formulate their approaches and make decisions even as our nation’s understanding of what constitutes terrorism preparedness has continued to evolve, and in the face of corresponding shifts in federal priorities.

For a few jurisdictions, terrorism preparedness is a federal responsibility, discharged through federal grants.

Since 9/11, white supremacists and other far-right extremists have been responsible for almost three times as many attacks on U.S. soil as Islamic terrorists, the government reported.

From 2009 through 2018, the far right has been responsible for 73% of domestic extremist-related fatalities, according to a 2019 study by the Anti-Defamation League (ADL). And the toll is growing. More people—49—were murdered by far-right extremists in the U.S. last year

The horrific act of “Domestic Terrorism” which occurred in my city on December 10<sup>th</sup> 2019 is a prime example of this statement.

At 12:43 hrs. the police radios crackled with urgency!

*“In the back of the cemetery! We have a PO shot in the head, down on the ground in a lifeless condition”.*

Responding police units found Det. Joseph Seals laying mortally wounded on the ground.

Det. Seals was a highly decorated, well respected Jersey City Police Officer. He was a member of the department’s Cease Fire Unit, a squad formed in 2013 mainly tasked with investigating non-fatal shootings.

On Tuesday morning, Seals was on the streets in Greenville near Bayview Cemetery. He spotted the U-Haul cargo van which was the subject of a homicide BOLO from a neighboring city.

As Det. Joseph Seals lay dead in Jersey City’s historic Bayview Cemetery, a deadly rampage by the officer’s killers was underway just a mile away.

A security camera captured the horror as a white U-Haul cargo van pulled up in front of a Catholic elementary school across the street from a small orthodox synagogue and kosher grocery store, on Martin Luther King Drive.

The driver, David Anderson, clad in a dark trench coat, burst out of the car with an AR-15-style rifle in his right hand. He immediately started firing as he crossed the street in the pouring rain.

His passenger, Francine Graham got out carrying a Mossberg 12-gauge shotgun and followed him.

Without pausing, Anderson fired round after round into the JC Kosher Supermarket to the right of a nondescript synagogue and an upstairs yeshiva filled with 60 children.

Terrified people on the sidewalk scattered. Some dove for cover, some ran full-speed down the street.

Anderson and Graham disappeared into the store.

Leah Minda Ferencz, 33, a mother of three, owned the grocery with her husband, Moishe Ferencz. He had left the store briefly to go to the synagogue next door for afternoon *minchah* prayer.

Douglas Miguel Rodriguez, 47, a store employee, was found near the back entrance, believed to be shot as he sought to escape. Married with an 11-year-old daughter, he had come to the U.S. from Ecuador three years earlier.

Moshe Deutsch, a 24-year-old rabbinical student visiting from Williamsburg, was inside getting a sandwich.

In the next few minutes, two police officers running to the scene in the city's Greenville section were shot and wounded.

In the more than three hours that followed, Martin Luther King Drive between Bidwell and Bayview avenues turned into a war zone.

Hundreds of shots were fired, bullets smacking into the Sacred Heart School on the other side of MLK Drive, where children huddled.

Police helicopters hovered overhead while SWAT teams took up rooftop positions.

A JCPD Bear Cat armored vehicle rumbled into position in front of the store, detectives firing from inside.

The siege finally ended when the armored vehicle, occupied by tactically equipped police officers breached the grocery store engaging both subjects.

Only then did officers find the bodies of the three victims along with the two shooters, who were shot dead by police.

In their abandoned U-Haul van was a pipe bomb and a note: **"I do this because my creator makes me do this and I hate who he hates,"**

This horrific event was brought to a conclusion due to the tactical equipment and training provided to law enforcement officers all of which was funded through the UASI grant program.

State and local officials are responsible for initiating the critical first response in the U.S. preparedness system, which calls for the lowest possible level of government to manage to an emergency.

States have very little resources for this of their own—they have relied on the federal government from the beginning.

They have essentially been able to stand up their preparedness activities in the last decade on the shoulders of federal support.

Simply put, reduced Homeland Security funding places our Nation at risk.

It minimizes our capacity to mitigate, prepare, respond, and recover from hazard events, while simultaneously increasing our risk.

If we are to continue to prepare for, respond to, and recover from evolving threats and disasters we will need sufficient resources to sustain and adapt our capabilities accordingly.

In closing, I wish to extend my sincere thanks for affording me the opportunity to appear before you today.