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**HEARING ON “UNDERSTANDING THE IMPORTANCE OF DHS PREPAREDNESS
GRANTS: PERSPECTIVES FROM THE FIELD”**

**BEFORE THE U.S. HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
COMMITTEE ON HOMELAND SECURITY
SUBCOMMITTEE ON EMERGENCY PREPAREDNESS, RESPONSE, AND
RECOVERY**

**310 CANNON HOUSE OFFICE BUILDING, WASHINGTON, DC
THURSDAY, JANUARY 9, 2020**

Good morning Chair Payne, Ranking Member King, and members of the subcommittee. I am John Miller, Deputy Commissioner of Intelligence and Counterterrorism for the New York City Police Department (NYPD). On behalf of Police Commissioner Dermot Shea and Mayor Bill de Blasio, I am pleased to testify before your subcommittee today to discuss the NYPD’s counterterrorism and emergency management efforts and the essential role our federal partnerships and DHS grant funding plays in the NYPD’s efforts to secure New York City.

I want to be clear from the outset, and I know that myself and other executives within the NYPD charged with keeping the city safe have made this point before, our ability to prevent or be adequately prepared for catastrophic events is dependent in no small part on our successful collaboration with our federal partners and the funding which the federal government provides our city. Funding that, if eliminated, reduced, or frankly not increased, will result in an erosion of our counterterror and intelligence capabilities, cessation of many of the initiatives that I will talk about today, and a significant limitation of our overall emergency preparedness posture.

Although New York City enjoys the status of being the safest large city in the nation, we also remain the primary target for violent extremists, both foreign and homegrown, as well as state sponsored terror networks seeking to use New York City as a pawn in their global terror campaign. That is not speculation – it is the consensus of the global intelligence community and vividly apparent to the entire nation in light of our military’s recent action against Qassem Soleimani. Unlike any other city, New York City was required to undertake an immense response to secure itself based on action our country took in its own defense. That is nothing new. In fact, these nefarious organizations and networks are in a perpetual state of planning to identify targets and vulnerabilities in New York City particularly, in the event their handlers determine attacking our homeland is in their strategic interests. Consequently, the NYPD is in a perpetual state of alert to identify and neutralize not only those seeking to attack our city, but also terrorist scouts that aim to feed intelligence about our city to their terrorist managers. Three such cases come to mind. All three sleeper agents working for Hezbollah and scouting New York City. All three arrested by the NYPD and its federal partners since 2017. The most recent, Alexei Saab, arrested this past July.

Since September 11, 2001, there have been more than thirty terrorist plots against New York City, with targets such as Times Square, the Brooklyn Bridge, John F. Kennedy Airport, the New York Stock Exchange, the subway system as well as major synagogues and other sites. In most cases, they have been thwarted by the efforts of the NYPD and the FBI-NYPD Joint Terrorist Task Force utilizing traditional law enforcement techniques, as well as cutting-edge crime fighting and counterterror technology.

Since June alone we have uncovered and stopped four plots in various stages. Last month a Brooklyn man who was radicalized on-line was arrested, he pledged allegiance to ISIS, and was active in encrypted pro-ISIS chatrooms, posting bomb making instructions and calling for attacks. In September, a Hezbollah operative living in New Jersey was charged with terrorism related crimes after having conducted extensive surveillance on potential bombing targets in the city, such as the UN, the Statue of Liberty, Times Square and our airports and bridges. He specifically scouted these locations for structural weaknesses so as to inflict maximum damage and chaos. In August, a Queens man was charged with attempting to provide material support for ISIS after having planned a knife attack on the US Open in Flushing. He had gone so far as to purchase a tactical knife and a mask, as well as gear to film his attack. In June, a different Queens man was arrested after obtaining two handguns with obliterated serial numbers to carry out an attack on Times Square where he planned to target and kill civilians and police.

Tragically, in recent years four attacks have succeeded in striking our city; an explosion in Chelsea; a white supremacist who murdered an African-American man with a sword as a “practice run” to a larger plot; a terrorist who drove a truck into the West Side Highway Running Path which killed 8 people; and an ISIS-inspired suicide bomber who set off a homemade explosive device at the Port Authority Bus Terminal subway station that injured three individuals and himself.

Freshest in our minds, of course, is the rash of anti-Semitic violence that has taken place in and around New York City, as well as the increasing trend of violent bias crimes of all types we have seen nationwide. Last month we formed a new unit within the Intelligence Bureau, the Racially and Ethnically Motivated Extremism (REME) unit, which operates as a quasi-taskforce consisting of about 25 NYPD personnel working side-by-side with members of the New Jersey, New York, and Pennsylvania state police and agents from federal Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives. REME is specifically dedicated to investigating and stamping out violent bias crimes in and around the city before they occur and in under a month the unit has opened dozens of investigations. It is the proactive counterpart to our Hate Crimes Unit, which investigates bias crimes after they occur.

Counterterrorism, and emergency preparedness broadly, should not merely imply a reactive posture. We cannot operate, and have not operated, from a position that accepts there is nothing we can do to prevent an attack and instead should merely prepare for the inevitability of it happening and how we should respond. Our Intelligence Bureau’s entire mission is to uncover plots before they become realized and people are hurt or killed.

The NYPD heavily relies on federal funding to strengthen our counterterrorism, intelligence, and emergency preparedness capabilities, including the security of critical transportation and port

infrastructure. The Department has received \$1.9 billion in counterterrorism funds via federal grants since 2002. While in recent years the funding has remained relatively steady year-to-year, the City received \$26 million less in FY2018 than in FY2008.

The most valuable asset we have in the fight against violent extremists is our highly trained and dedicated personnel. This funding has helped staff our Counterterrorism and Intelligence Bureaus, funds our Critical Response Command (CRC), our first line of defense against any natural or manmade disaster, funds our Counter Terrorism Officer (CTO) program, funds increased strategic counterterrorism deployments in the transit system and at our ports, and has enabled the Department to train our entire patrol force in counterterrorism and emergency response techniques when responding to explosive, chemical, biological, and radiological incidents, as well as training to respond to active shooter incidents so they can engage and end coordinated terrorist attacks. This vital funding also provides critical instruction to officers in life-saving techniques that can be implemented during an ongoing attack, in the effort to save lives before it is safe enough for medical personnel to enter an unfolding event.

The grant funding has been no less instrumental in building a cutting edge technological infrastructure to support the efforts of our personnel. It allows the Department to purchase and install chemical and radiation sensors in and around New York City, to train and deploy chemical and explosive detecting “vapor wake” dogs, and to install hundreds of license plate readers throughout the city. The very same plate readers that were instrumental in locating and capturing the perpetrator of the Hanukkah slaughter in Monsey, New York. Key to all of this is our federally funded Domain Awareness System (DAS), which receives data from those chemical and radiological sensors I mentioned, as well as the ShotSpotter sensors, information from 911 calls, and live feeds from CCTV cameras around the city, and its advanced interface and mapping capability enables us to monitor emerging conditions and threats and to target our response in the wake of a large-scale event.

The NYPD’s counterterrorism capabilities are unmatched among municipal police forces, as they must necessarily be, but we can do better. Our ability to adapt and innovate is directly tied to a continuing and increased level of federal funding. Even as the years between 9/11 and the present day grow, the threat has not diminished. One day in the future, when New York City is no longer under constant threat, I hope and pray that we can have a conversation about how better to use our resources, but that time is not today. We cannot afford to become complacent.

Thank you again for this opportunity to testify today. I am happy to answer any questions you may have.