



COMMITTEE ON HOMELAND SECURITY

Ranking Member Bennie G. Thompson

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Hearing Statement of Emergency Management & Technology Subcommittee Ranking Member Tim Kennedy (D-NY)

Mass Gathering Events: Assessing Security Coordination and Preparedness

May 21, 2025

First, I want to say that my thoughts are with those in Kentucky, Missouri, Indiana, and Virginia, and everyone who was impacted by the tornadoes and storms that hit over the weekend.

Nearly 30 lives were lost in the devastation. Natural disasters continue to pose a significant threat to our nation, and we must ensure that we are prepared as a nation to respond. Shortly after the storm, it became clear that the local National Weather Service (NWS) office in Kentucky is one of four offices nationwide without enough staff.

NWS offices, a part of the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA), provide critical tornado forecasting that is then transmitted into emergency alerts so that communities can prepare. The future of emergency management in this country is dependent on the kinds of investments we make in these missions and the staff that keep them running.

I am deeply concerned that the President's budget request cuts NOAA by at least 27 percent. I fear that this would only increase the level of devastation we saw this weekend in future emergencies. Additionally, we are days away from the start of hurricane season, and the chaos at the Federal Emergency Management Agency continues to hinder our ability to support communities. This won't just affect responses to natural disasters. FEMA's preparedness and grants administration will have a direct impact on the security of mass gatherings like the 2026 FIFA World Cup and the 2028 Olympics.

Mass gatherings do not happen in a vacuum, and having a strong emergency management infrastructure that can respond, for example, to a mass gathering dealing with extreme weather, will be essential to ensuring that the two premier, once-in-a-generation sporting events that we are discussing today are as seamless as possible. To prepare for the 2026 FIFA World Cup and the 2028 Summer Olympics, state and local first responders across the U.S. are scaling up for historic visitation, record infrastructure investments, and the potential for high security risks.

The Department of Homeland Security's Office of Intelligence and Analysis conducts an annual Homeland Threat Assessment, and its publication for 2025 warned that the terrorism threat environment throughout the country remains high. Given this, it's critical that the federal government make good on its promise to provide states and local communities with FEMA preparedness grant funding so that we are ready to respond to and mitigate any threats during these high-profile events.

I am concerned that President Trump's budget proposes a \$646 million cut to FEMA's non-disaster grant programs. Cuts like these severely undermine our ability to detect threats, support our local law enforcement partners, and prepare for major events like the World Cup and the Olympics.

Now is the time to shore up FEMA grant programs like the Homeland Security Grant Program, which includes the State Homeland Security Program, the Urban Area Security Initiative, and Operation Stonegarden.

I look forward to hearing about the importance of these programs from our witnesses, as well as the ways in which the federal government can support local law enforcement, the private sector, and federal agencies in collectively securing mass events.

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