

## Ranking Member Brian Higgins (D-NY) Opening Statement

### “Protecting the Homeland Against Mumbai Style Attacks and the Threat from Lashkar-e-Taiba”

#### Subcommittee on Counterterrorism and Intelligence

June 12, 2013

In November 2008, the terrorist group Lashkar-e-Taiba conducted a Fedayeen style attack in Mumbai. For over 60 hours, terrorists armed with firearms and explosives attacked multiple targets across Mumbai, killing more than 170 people. Lashkar-e-Taiba is recognized by the US government as a foreign terrorist organization. Given that there have been Americans that have cooperated with Lashkar-e-Taiba and the groups' connection with Al Qaeda, I agree that a threat from that group be examined and evaluated.

I also agree that we should examine and evaluate Fedayeen style attacks. We should look in to whether or not groups other than LeT are planning these types of attacks. There has been evidence that Al Qaeda has sought to replicate this tactic in the West. We know that Al Qaeda seeks to recruit Americans for their plotting and execution of terrorist attacks. We also know that Hezbollah has a presence in North America. Do these groups have a capability to execute a Fedayeen style attack?

When we look at these kind of attacks, we need to also see how our first responders are able to respond to them in the event that they occur. Do they have the resources to respond? Do they have access to the intelligence that they need to know that a potential terrorist is planning an attack? Unfortunately, not all jurisdictions are prepared nor can they be.

In the Buffalo/Niagara region there are high impact targets. Buffalo is home to the Peace Bridge, one of the busiest crossings at the Northern Border. Over 30 billion dollars of annual commerce travels through the Peace Bridge in Buffalo, Niagara region. A Fedayeen style attack in this area could be catastrophic to its critical infrastructure.

Even though we know this area is home to high impact targets, this area is not considered "high risk" enough for state and locals in this area to receive funding under the Urban Area Security Initiative "UASI" program. Without UASI funding, the local law enforcement and emergency personnel do not have the ability to sustain the advancements they have made since 9/11. How can they be expected to protect the area in the event of a sophisticated attack such as a Fedayeen, if they don't have the proper equipment or interoperability capabilities? Furthermore, the local law enforcement and the federal government still need improvement with information sharing.

Earlier this year, there was a terrorist plot thwarted by the Royal Canadian Mounted Police. Had this plot been successful, it could have caused grave disaster to Western New York. Unfortunately, the intelligence about this plot was not shared with the local Sheriff in advance of the arrest of the alleged terrorists.

How can first responders be first preventers if they do not have critical resources and information? We ask a lot of our first responders. They are the ones that know the area the best. They know the people and the places in their areas better than anyone. We should trust them and entrust them with the resources they need.