

Notes for Tuesday, June 21, 2016

“Protecting our Passengers: Perspectives on Securing Surface Transportation in New Jersey and New York”

Emergency Preparedness, Response, and Communications Subcommittee

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Emergency Service Unit/Bomb Squad**

Introduction:

I am Lieutenant Vincent Glenn from the Jersey City Police Department and I appreciate the opportunity to speak before you today. I am currently the Commander of the Emergency Service Unit. The Emergency Service Unit (ESU) oversees the Bomb Squad, SCUBA team, maritime operations, and the CBRNE response unit (CBRNE meaning response to chemical, biological, radiological, nuclear, and explosive incidents).

Our specially trained and equipped personnel are responsible for prevention and response to terrorism events, including those in our local port areas, industrial facilities, transit hubs, commuter corridors, and residential neighborhoods. Officers who are assigned to ESU include FBI certified Bomb Technicians, Coast Guard credentialed boat operators, State certified hazardous material technicians, and fully certified SCUBA divers. ESU officers are capable of responding with a full complement of portable CBRNE equipment to withstand and assist in the response and recovery of criminal incidents, terrorism events, and emergencies due to natural disasters.

Background:

The City of Jersey City is situated on a peninsula with the Hackensack River and Newark Bay on its western shore and the Hudson River and New York Bay on its eastern shore. The city's residential population is nearly 270,000 residents and it is estimated that daytime commuters raises the population to approximately half-a-million people. Jersey City's 21 square miles and population density of nearly 17,000 people per square mile makes it the third most densely populated large city in America and it is ranked as one of the top 120 cities vulnerable to a terrorist attack.

Our officers continually collaborate with emergency management officials, law enforcement partners, and first responders, through the New York/ New Jersey metropolitan region, in a

whole-community-approach, to carefully manage resources and response activities. Some of our partnerships include participation in the NJ State Detect and Render Safe Task Force, Urban Area Security Initiative, Securing the Cities program, and FBI Level III WMD Stabilization Team, and FBI Electronic Countermeasures Task Force.

We, as first responders are dedicated to enhancing emergency preparedness and enabling rapid recovery from terrorist events, natural disasters, and other emergencies. Some of the critical infrastructure, soft targets, and buffer zone responsibilities include the Jersey City waterfront financial district, the Holland Tunnel, five (5) separate commuter ferry terminals, three (3) separate public marinas, Cape Liberty Cruise Port, Port Jersey Shipping Terminal, Global Container Terminal, Claremont Terminal, Public Service Electric Hudson Generating Station, Liberty State Park, and Ellis Island. Additionally, ESU incident prevention and response equipment is utilized along Newark Bay and the Hackensack River for security risk mitigation of the numerous bridge crossings and support stanchions for interstate highways and state thoroughfares running in and out of the New York/ New Jersey metropolitan area. The JCPD Emergency Service Unit has existing MOU's with UASI and the USCG to respond with personnel and CBRNE equipment to areas along the Hudson River, Hackensack River, New York Bay, Raritan Bay, Kill Van Kull, Port Elizabeth and Port Newark.

Training/Preparation:

One of the most fundamental aspects of responding to any emergency incident is interoperability. On a daily basis, Jersey City Police Department, particularly ESU, relies on partnerships with all local agencies to ensure the safety of everyone. We are constantly working to foster these partnerships and improve our interagency communications. Training courses, multi-jurisdictional drills, and inter-disciplinary exercises, prepare us to be ready to respond to every perceived threat to public safety, regardless of whether that threat is predictable or emerging. And because the skill set to meet an all hazards approach is perishable, training and education must be ongoing and repeated-- for new and seasoned responders alike. As complex threats intensify it is our duty to lead, coach, and direct our first responders.

Members of ESU dedicate a significant number of hours to specialized training. Bomb Technicians earn certification after an initial six weeks of training at the FBI's Hazardous Devices School, the only school in the country certified to train Bomb Technicians. They then continue their education with monthly in-service classes, periodic multijurisdictional exercises

and drills, and continuing professional development at HDS. Our SCUBA divers spend hundreds of hours in initial training to attain skills such as advanced open water diving, rescue diving, and evidence recovery. Their training continues as they perform practical exercises in hazardous environments such as the Hudson River, Hackensack River, Newark Bay and New York Bay. Boat operators are fully credentialed by the National Maritime Service as they learn to pilot our 37 foot CBRNE rescue and patrol boat, which is also equipped with radiation detection equipment. This credential mandates that operators maintain hundreds of hours, on the water, per-year to ensure proficiency. Their skills are particularly necessary when operating under harsh conditions, which is likely to occur when responding to those in need of assistance. All of these disciplines practice response to, and recovery from, criminal incidents, terrorism events, and disruptions due to emergencies. However, just as important is the prevention and mitigation of security threats that these officers accomplish by routinely conducting critical infrastructure surveys and safety checks.

Emergency response preparation has experienced tremendous local support during drills conducted at public locations and sensitive areas. These drills, which are frequently covered in the media, give first responders an invaluable opportunity to work with stakeholders and other officials in demonstrating interoperability that is so essential to managing a crisis. Within Jersey City, these drills have recently been carried out at the Holland Tunnel, the JP Morgan Chase building, St. Peter's University and New Jersey City University. An upcoming drill is scheduled to test emergency response to the Newport Mall. In addition, ongoing radiological training exercises are conducted at maritime chokepoints in the area of the Verrazano Bridge, George Washington Bridge, and Bayonne Bridge.

It is not only emergency response agencies that need the ability to work cohesively, but it is important for the public to be educated and empowered to unite with first responders to achieve coordination and preparedness. For example, the Police Department's Bomb Squad conducts community outreach to our partners in the public and private sector with lectures and demonstrations in such topics as IED awareness, evacuation procedures, response to bomb threats, and active shooter safety. Our SCUBA team visits junior police academies to demonstrate water safety, and our K-9 officers provide question & answer sessions at local schools. It is because of special skills afforded by advanced training that we as a profession can continue raise standards, improve preparedness planning, and build partnerships between local government and the public.

Equipment:

Not only is training and education perishable, but the tools and equipment to meet emerging threats and mitigate disruptions due to emergencies are perishable as well. Not only does ordering specialized equipment take many steps, it more-often-than-not incurs reoccurring expenses over time. Many of the tools to which I refer, require everything from rudimentary maintenance and repair, to advanced technological upgrades and expansion- this, in addition to running day-to-day operations. Some of the highly special tools needed to perform the task of protecting the public and enhancing emergency preparedness include radiation detectors, counter IED x-ray systems, suspicious powder test-kits, chemical air monitors, interoperable communications gear, and bomb disposal robots. The specialized equipment that I just mentioned, among many other tools, demonstrate the multiple defenses that are needed to improve our approach to pervasive threats, targets of interest, critical infrastructure.

Realization:

With pride, I can relate a few incidents that occurred within the past year that concluded with a positive outcome. We responded to a report of a suspicious package on the PATH train in Jersey City, during prime commuter hours. Upon assessing the situation, the item, a pressure cooker, was remotely dismantled with minimal disruption to the public. On another occasion, a radiological source was detected by police near the Hoboken waterfront and ruled out as hazardous by the Jersey City Emergency Service Unit with the use of advanced isotope identification equipment. Recently, a piece of sensitive Homeland Security equipment was safely retrieved by Jersey City Police divers in the area of the Port Jersey Marine Terminal. It is through the cooperation of a variety of agencies and the public, that these incidents were quickly resolved without incident.

Summary:

In summation, we need not be reminded that the New York/New Jersey metropolitan area has been labeled as a target rich environment, perhaps even the most high risk urban area in the country. It is the constant vigilance of public safety professionals who operate in a challenging environment, all-day every-day, that allow for a robust response to disruptions and emergency events of all types. On behalf of the quarter million Jersey City residents, my professional

partners, and our government officials, I thank you for affording me the opportunity to testify before you on these important matters.