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Testimony
Before the

Senate Committee on Homeland Security and Government Affairs

On

"Nuclear Terrorism: Confronting the Challenges of the Day After"

The United State Senate

April 15, 2008

Introduction

Thank you Chairman Lieberman, Ranking Member Collins and members of the Committee for the opportunity to appear before you today and for your leadership in recognizing, and being willing to discuss one of the true catastrophic terrorist scenarios that our country faces. My name is John Gibb, and I am Director of the New York State Emergency Management Office. I have served as Director of SEMO since December, 2005, and I have 26 years of experience in emergency management at the state and local level. Interestingly, my first experience in emergency planning was associated with the development of crisis relocation plans in the early 1980's, which were very detailed plans focused on evacuating major cities in the face of escalating international tensions which could result in nuclear conflict.

While the ten kiloton yield improvised nuclear device proposed by National Planning Scenario Number One is only a fraction of the size of the nuclear weapons that

were historically aimed at our nation, the consequences of the detonation of a ten kiloton, or even a one kiloton improvised device would present devastating, catastrophic and overwhelming challenges to the response community. My comments address only a few of the response challenges and how New York would address these issues with our current plans and resources.

Command and Control

A nuclear incident would generate an immediate, large scale federal response and local, state and federal emergency plans need to accurately anticipate how we will tie together response assets as well as command and control across all levels of government. The Incident Command System (ICS) component of the National Incident Management System (NIMS) has given the response community a platform from which to build the large response organizations necessary to respond to an event of this scope.

In New York State, we have used ICS as our state disaster management system since 1996 and Governor Paterson has continued this requirement for state agencies. New York City's development and use of CIMS, the Citywide Incident Management System is another best practice for having in place a scalable, unified management system that will give the response organization the best chance to integrate the local, state, regional and national resources that would be required to respond to a nuclear incident. The basic tenets of ICS including chain of command, unity of command / effort / outcomes, and efficient span of control will each be a key to the response.

In New York State we are now focusing our ICS training efforts on developing deployable incident management teams to build additional command and control support resources for impacted communities. Federal NIMS implementation guidance should

evolve beyond requirements for training numbers and recognize this need. Our state would benefit from a deployable, state based - national cadre of incident management teams that could be immediately integrated into response operations to augment our state system.

Assessment and Evaluation

Local, state and national operations centers recognize the absolute necessity to have a "common operational picture" – processes and communications in place so that all involved see the incident and its implications in an accurate and similar way. In a nuclear event life saving decisions will need to be based on accurate assessments of radiation levels and downwind projections. If there is a detonation, how quickly will we know it was a nuclear device? Who / what agency can look at an incident scene and make an accurate assessment of the yield of the device and the amount of radioactive material that was involved and potential downwind exposures? Short of that how will we collect and analyze radiological date from the scene and determine downwind impacts?

In New York we have three commercial nuclear power plant sites. Our planning for potential emergencies at these sites has allowed us to develop processes to collect and analyze radiological information and make projections of downwind exposure levels and impacts.

We are also fortunate to host a well-trained and practiced National Guard Civil Support Team (CST). The team is an immediately deployable state asset that can greatly assist on-scene / near scene assessment and evaluation efforts for incidents large and small. The CST is a unique and critical resource in our State and a key component of our

response to WMD incidents. It is critical that the proposed second CST team to pemanently cover New York City be authorized by the Senate.

Post 9/11 investments of homeland security funding in our state has resulted in the purchase and deployment of new radiological detection equipment and more responders trained to utilize it. The federal government also has radiological monitoring resources that need to be integrated into the response as well. Our plans need to better address how this assessment and evaluation effort will be unified and integrated. The public will quickly lose confidence if we have conflicting assessments of the magnitude of the event. We need to ensure that our operations can de-conflict different model results and agency analysis of data. A commitment to and use of common national assessment models would help to alleviate this problem. Next year, New York State is planning a full-scale exercise with Federal Radiological Monitoring and Assessment Center (FRMAC) to test our respective capabilities. We will need to leverage this federal / state partnership not only for response but for re-entry, return and recovery efforts as well. The post-blast reclamation efforts will be driven by radiological assessments and the potential area contaminated could be several thousand square miles.

Equally important is the integration of pre-detonation and real time threat information (post-blast) into the emergency community. The Intelligence Sharing Environment recently created is greatly enhancing the movement of intelligence in the law enforcement and intelligence communities, but there is still work to be done in getting this information from the state fusion centers into the non-law enforcement community in a productive, real-time way to ensure that everyone has the most current information and common operating picture.

Protective Actions

A key to saving lives in hours following a nuclear detonation will be giving members of the public clear direction on what they need to do to protect themselves. The population in high exposure areas will not immediately sense that they are in danger, and yet every minute that evacuation is delayed is potentially life threatening. How will people receive emergency information?

In New York State we have NY-ALERT which is a web-based, all-hazards alert and notification system developed by the State Emergency Management Office. This system, designed and built by a small but visionary Information Technology staff at SEMO, allows public officials to simultaneously broadcast emergency information through series of gateways including the Emergency Alert System; email; blast faxes; text messages to cell phones; posting to the NY-ALERT site; RSS (real simple syndicate) feeds; and voice messages to landline and cell phones. We have been implementing NY-ALERT statewide over the past ten months and it is currently the alert and warning system for 55 of our State University campuses, 25 City University campuses and many counties with additional coming on board each week. We have more that 1.3 million subscriber records already accessible through NY-ALERT. The system has been built using state resources and Governor Paterson has made a significant commitment of $5.4 million, in our state budget passed just last week to further enhance and support the system. It has been frustrating to have available Hazard Mitigation Grant Program dollars and proposed investments in NY-ALERT be not allowed. Federal guidance on the use of mitigation funding should be revisited to ensure that investments in capabilities

that directly mitigate the consequences of catastrophic disasters be allowed. We need to look at how we can best enhance national warning capabilities as technology provides us new opportunities.

Emergency Worker Exposure Control.

We have a fundamental responsibility to protect our emergency workers and New York State has well defined protocols to limit emergency worker exposures during radiological incidents. The exposures that could be expected from a nuclear detonation are projected to be at levels that greatly exceed any that we currently plan for. As an example, we train state responders that we would not expect them to be subject to an exposure of more than 5 REM for an emergency. Yet for a nuclear detonation scenario, we will have life saving and security related missions to perform in areas where exposures could be hundreds of REMs if projection models are accurate.

Dosimetry stockpiles are limited and in some cases we are relying on cold war era instrumentation that is more than 50 years old. Our first responders are the finest in the world, and they will take action in the early hours of an incident of this type to rescue, evacuate and decontaminate the injured and provide evacuation support for people to get out of harms way. We need to re-examine and provide guidance and alternative approaches to federal, state and local emergency planners that will allow us to address this issue**.**

Victim Care

A nuclear detonation in a densely populated area could cause hundreds of thousands of casualties. On-scene decisions regarding rescue of people who have already

been exposed to lethal doses of radiation, or sending responders into areas where they could be subject to lethal exposures is beyond current training and planning guidance. There is no ready system in place or planned for that would result in the victims of this type of event receiving pre-hospital or definitive care in any reasonable time frame. The National Disaster Medical System (NDMS) should be realistically assessed to determine the gap that exists in their abilities to respond adequately to this type of scenario.

Other Issues

Decontamination and sheltering of evacuees, fatality management, critical infrastructure maintenance and operation, integration of response resources from across the nation, long term denial of entry into impacted areas, business and economic continuity, and short and long term recovery efforts beginning the second day after are all equally problematic and likely beyond the scope of our state level plans in New York.

A Need for Continued Planning and Investment

The Urban Area Security Initiative (UASI) program and the Urban Area Work Groups and Regional Transportation Security Work Groups that have been formed over the past five years are likely the most appropriate places for continued planning work in this area. The Secure the Cities Program (and an earlier Radiological Pilot Program), while focused on prevention, is providing equipment, basic training and data sharing protocols and processes that will be adaptable and critical to the post-blast response.

Commissioner Joe Bruno from the New York City Office of Emergency Management has organized an ambitious regional planning effort for this year's newly announced Regional Catastrophic Planning Grant Program which will be addressing no

fewer than eight projects aimed at closing catastrophic planning gaps including: development of a regional catastrophic planning and operating system; evacuation and sheltering coordination plans; interim and long-term housing operations plans; critical infrastructure protection and restoration plans; a northeast mortuary operations plan, and regional continuity of operations plans. The RCPGP, while presenting administrative challenges, offers hope that there can be sustained funding to support regional, multi-state planning efforts that will focus on catastrophic emergencies of all types including the nuclear scenario.

Federal catastrophic planning efforts need to be transparent as possible to the response community including the development of "playbooks", operational and tactical plans for a nuclear scenario. Federal plans will work best if they are developed jointly with state and local planners. The scale of an event of this nature is huge and any meaningful planning effort needs to be sized to the task with a commitment to dedicate the resources, training, and exercises to provide the reasonable assurance that the plan can be executed.

Existing federal response stockpiles including the Strategic National Stockpile, the Pre-positioned Equipment Program, and FEMA commodity distribution centers should be measured against the local and state gaps that would be created by the nuclear detonation scenario so that we have a clear picture of what portion of the response can be supported.

Thank you again for the Committee's examination of this issue and the opportunity to speak to you today.