



County of Fairfax, Virginia

To protect and enrich the quality of life for the people, neighborhoods and diverse communities of Fairfax County

Testimony of

**Anthony H. Griffin, County Executive,
Fairfax County, Virginia**

and

**Chairman, Chief Administrative Officers Committee
Washington Metropolitan Council of Governments**

to the

**Subcommittee on Oversight of Government Management,
the Federal Workforce, and the District of Columbia**

**Senator George V. Voinovich, Chair
Senator Daniel K. Akaka, Ranking Member**

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Mr. Chairman, Mr. Ranking Member and members of the Committee, thank you for the opportunity to speak to you on behalf of my fellow Chief Administrative Officers in the National Capital Region (NCR) on the role of local government in securing the National Capital Region.

The Chief Administrative Officers worked in close partnership with others in the region in developing the recently completed National Capital Region's Homeland Security Strategic Plan. It is a long term, unified effort to improve "all hazards" preparedness across the region. This strategic plan lays out our region-wide strategy for strengthening our capabilities across all phases of preparedness (prevention, protection, response, and recovery) to manage homeland security risks. It sets our course and provides a strategic approach for planning and decision making.

The "all hazards" approach to preparedness means we need to weigh the likelihood and consequences of a broad array of threats. These include, but are not limited to: extremes in weather, industrial hazards, viral pathogens, and of course, terrorism that can take many forms.

Implementing the plan will be a complex process that will involve all of the NCR's partners to include government as well as private and civic sectors. The NCR needs tangible programs that are aligned with the strategic plan. The region must allocate resources and find additional sources of funding to support these programs, and must put in place oversight and accountability structures and processes. The Emergency Preparedness Council has assumed responsibility for implementing the strategic Plan and the Chief Administrative Officers' look forward to supporting them.

Local governments continue to lead the way in emergency response. We generally operate the same on a day-to-day basis as we do during emergency situations. Therefore, if a terrorist attack were to happen in Fairfax County, Fairfax County would be in charge of the response. If an incident took place in Prince George's County, Prince George's County would lead the way.

Local Emergency Operation Plans outline the areas of responsibility for local agencies when responding to disasters or large-scale emergency situations. These plans assign broad responsibilities for disaster mitigation, preparedness, response, and recovery to local government agencies and support organizations.

All emergency responses begin at the local level; however, when a local jurisdiction determines that it no longer has adequate resources to manage the event, the locality can request assistance from other localities through the region's mutual aid network or declare an emergency and request assistance from the state. Once the state has been notified, it will provide assistance within its capability. If the state is unable to provide the requested assistance, the governor will contact the President to request a declaration of emergency and federal disaster assistance coordinated by the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA).

Should the region need military support, the Joint Force Headquarters-National Capital Region was established to plan and coordinate for homeland defense and civil support operations. This support would be coordinated through the Defense Coordinating Officer in the Joint Field Office subsequent to a Presidential Disaster Declaration except in life threatening situations where support would be provided immediately. We have continued to strengthen our homeland security collaboration with Major General Swan and the Joint Force Headquarters. We also coordinate with the U.S. Department of Homeland Security's Office of National Capital Region Coordination. Both of these federal offices will help ensure a timely response by the federal government to requests for assistance.

Local governments in the National Capital Region are committed to an "all hazards" approach to emergency preparedness. Our Regional Emergency Coordination Plan, which was approved by the Metropolitan Washington Council of Governments Board of Directors in 2002, is comprehensive, inclusive, and tested. This "all hazards" plan has worked well during very different regional events. Officials successfully coordinated during natural disasters like Hurricane Isabel and the Presidents Day Snowstorm, public safety and security threats like the anthrax incidents and sniper shootings, as well as last-minute events like the Ronald Reagan funeral.

The plan was designed around 15 special emergency support function groups such as transportation, fire and rescue, health services, energy, law enforcement and media relations. We have used the same emergency support functions as found in the National Response Plan issued by the Department of Homeland Security.

During the planning process, we made it a priority to unite federal, state and local governments with businesses, transportation and health entities, utility companies, educators and volunteer groups. This process ensured that our plan and our response would be as inclusive and comprehensive as possible.

The National Capital Region is defined as an Urban Area by the Department of Homeland Security, making it eligible for grant funds under the Urban Area Security Initiative (UASI) program. In addition, Virginia, Maryland, and the District receive DHS grant funds as states through other programs such as the State Homeland Security Grant and Law Enforcement Terrorism Prevention programs.

The UASI funds from Congress help purchase much-needed new equipment and provide funding for planning, training and exercises to ensure that first responders are prepared for major emergencies. Continued funding from the Urban Area Security Initiative is extremely important to the National Capital Region as it implements the NCR Homeland Security Strategic Plan over the next five years.

Regional leaders have worked together to wisely invest homeland security funds. Our primary focus, once again, has been to put in place effective programs and policies that will keep the region safe and make it even safer for years to come.

We have purchased back-up sets of personal protective gear for first responders and adopted interoperable systems that allow those first responders to communicate with each other quickly and directly, such as our 800 MHz radio cache.

We have developed emergency transportation plans, and are working to provide additional security and protection for our water supply. Further, the region is working on a Sheltering and Evacuation Plan that will include lessons learned from New Orleans.

The region's health officials are using an electronic surveillance system to more quickly track the reporting of diseases and symptoms of serious illnesses. The system connects pharmacists, hospital emergency rooms, schools, veterinarians, laboratories, and emergency medical services.

Our combined investment is helping build an enhanced and sustainable capacity to prevent, respond to, and recover from threats or acts of terrorism. However, in order to continue to improve our readiness, we will need further investment in a number of capabilities such as mass care, citizen preparedness, critical infrastructure protection, and interoperable communications.

As critical as the UASI funding is to the NCR for enhancement of the region's ability to prevent and respond, I want to emphasize that the cost of response rests primarily with the local governments. In Fairfax County alone, funding in FY 07 dollars has been allocated to the following functions which account for the majority of our first responders.

Police	\$162.4 M
Fire & Rescue	166.3 M
Sheriff	38.6 M
Office of Emergency Management	1.45 M
Health Department	45 M
911 Communications	8.9 M
Total	\$422.65 M

Additionally, the County is building a Public Safety and Transportation Operations Center which will include facilities for the State Police and the Virginia Department of Transportation's regional traffic management system. The County's share is approximately \$90 M. Given the County's investment in 36 fire stations, nine police substations and other supporting facilities and our collaborative approach to response utilized through the emergency support functions, Fairfax County spends approximately \$500 M to give the County the capacity to respond to emergencies on an "all hazards" basis.

Our companion jurisdictions in the NCR are funding comparable investments according to population and geographic size.

In summary, local governments in the NCR are better prepared and more coordinated since September 11, 2001. Our ability to communicate and cooperate has been tested several times since with anthrax, snipers, hurricanes and tropical storms. Valuable experience also was gained from sending teams to the Gulf Coast last year. We have made plans for pandemic flu and have completed the Strategic Plan. We have learned much, but know that we have much to do. We are, however, prepared to respond now and anytime in the future.

Thank you for the opportunity to share.