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**Panel Discussion:
“Homeland Security, 5 Years Ago and 5 Years From Now”**

Monterey, CA
Tuesday, January 29, 2008

It is a pleasure to be here to discuss with you the past and future of Homeland Security.

Over the past five years, I have been honored to have had the opportunity to serve in a number of senior roles while our nation moved forward in its efforts to develop robust Homeland Security policies.

I left my role on the front lines as Fire Chief in Miami to move to Washington, DC to be a part of this future. I joined DHS in 2001 as the U.S. Fire Administrator and then went on to serve as Director of the Preparedness Division of the Emergency Preparedness and Response Directorate. Following Hurricane Katrina, I was asked to lead FEMA in its essential mission and charged with developing it into a world class organization that would succeed not just today, but tomorrow.

With this in mind, we can clearly see the changes that have begun, and have a good idea of where we are going.

Five years ago, FEMA, the new Department of Homeland Security and its other component agencies were just beginning to break out of the traditional roles that each of us had been pigeonholed into for so long.

FEMA was seen as a resource center when a flood, hurricane or other disaster hit a small part of the country. We could be called upon for money, or sandbags or other resources that would lend a hand to the efforts on the ground. We had a narrower view of our responsibilities. We were not committed to working regularly with our counterparts in tribal, state and local government and did not even coordinate well with all of our federal partners.

I saw this when I was the Fire Chief on the scene following the ValuJet crash. An agent from a federal agency came, got out of his car, and declared he was in charge and that the

locals should all start taking orders from him. But while he made this declaration, the rental car he had arrived in – and apparently forgot to set the parking break in – rolled off the road and into the swamp. Needless to say he did not build trust and confidence with his actions.

But over the past five years, we have made great progress in developing a wider vision of homeland security. I could not have found a better leader and a better partner than Secretary Chertoff at DHS, whom you will hear from tomorrow. He is dedicated to building a team that works together on behalf of the American people and has supported us in our efforts to build a strong organization of which you can all be proud. FEMA and our partners across DHS and the entire federal government are working together to improve our communications and coordination while truly providing value to our partners in tribal, state and local government. We have placed a renewed emphasis on working with our partners in the private sector and in non-profit and volunteer organizations. We call this “Engaged Partnerships.”

FEMA is improving our operational capabilities and our business processes, and we are already stronger and more nimble than we were two years ago. Consider the results to date.

Since Katrina, FEMA has responded with to more than 300 federally declared disasters. Our largest activity in 2007 took place here in California, in response to the wild fires, but we’ve been involved in with tornadoes, ice storms, floods and hurricanes. And in each case the improvements at FEMA have been self evident and I am proud of these results.

FEMA’s activities here in Southern California in support of state, tribal and local activities provides a real-life example of the New FEMA’s commitment to leaning further forward and to working in close coordination with our partners at every level.

Even before the formal request for assistance came in, FEMA began planning for potential actions. Our regional staff were in touch with officials on the ground. We began considering what supplies would be needed, where they were located and how we could get them to the places they would do the most good. We put our response teams on stand-by and made sure there would be no delay between a Presidential declaration and our readiness to act. And we reached out to our federal partners – agencies like the Small Business Administration, the Department of Defense, and others – to make sure that, if called upon to act, we were ready to move forward together as a team.

The result: when Gov. Schwazenegger sent in his formal request for a disaster declaration in the middle of the night, we were there to review it and send it to the White House. And when the President signed the declaration that very night, we began to move.

Within hours of the signed declaration FEMA was on the ground. There was a FEMA liaison in the state's operation center. Staff scouted and secured locations to use for our activities in Southern California. We began deploying supplies from our facility in Northern California. Secretary Chertoff and I personally flew to the scene. At the largest shelter – Qualcomm Stadium – more than 200 FEMA employees began registering residents for assistance in multiple languages. I was particularly pleased to hear California's Senator, Barbara Boxer, recognize: "The important difference between FEMA during Katrina and now is that they have actually learned to bring people together as a team."

The next week I returned to California – and this time I was joined by President Bush and Governor Schwarzenegger. The Governor was pleased with our teamwork, noting: "The cooperation that we have seen from our President and from his administration has been absolutely fantastic. We asked for an Emergency Declaration, and we got it within 24 hours. Then when we saw the fires spreading and becoming a major disaster, we asked for a Major Disaster Declaration, and we got it, again within 24 hours. And that of course means a lot, because it provides millions of dollars in federal aid and loans to individuals, families, and businesses."

We should be and will be judged not only on FEMA's performance before, during and after an event, but also on how well we work with our partners across government and in the private and non-profit sectors.

This is what we mean by "engaged partnerships." Today we are committed to truly working hand-in-hand with you and your colleagues on the ground.

We recognize that "all disasters are local." The New FEMA does not mean that the federal government wants to step in or take over. The first response is always the work of tribal, state and local government. But the old paradigm of making our own plans and then executing them only after local, State and tribal governments are completely overwhelmed does not work. Instead, we need a robust, cooperative relationship among all participants so that we understand your vulnerabilities, risks and requirements.

Last week we unveiled the National Response Framework, a document that will guide the development of this system in the near future and for years to come. The NRF is a culmination of the lessons learned & thousands of comments from our partners at every level. It represents a "National Endeavor" involving local, state, tribal and federal governments as well as the private and non-profit sectors.

The NRF focuses on key concepts of: Engaged Partnerships; Tiered Response; Scalable, Flexible and Operational Capabilities; Unity of Effort through Unified Command; and

Readiness to Act. It uses clearer terminology, is easier to use, and has more clearly defines roles than its predecessor.

It is clearly the framework we will use moving forward. If you don't already have a copy of it, you can find it and its companion annexes on our web site at www.FEMA.gov/nrf.

With this framework in place, and with a renewed focus on working hand-in-hand with our partners at every level, both inside and outside of government, I know we will continue to strengthen our homeland security system over the next five years. I look forward to hearing from the other distinguished panelists on their thoughts and views and to our discussion here today.

Thank you.