



Department of Public Safety and Corrections
Public Safety Services

KATHLEEN BABINEAUX BLANCO
GOVERNOR

HENRY L. WHITEHORN, COLONEL
DEPUTY SECRETARY, PUBLIC SAFETY SERVICES
SUPERINTENDENT, OFFICE OF STATE POLICE

December 29, 2005
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HQ-1-1218

Honorable Tom Davis
Member of Congress
Chair, House Select Committee to Investigate the
Preparation for and Response to Hurricane Katrina
2157 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20515-6143

VIA FACSIMILE:
[REDACTED]

Re: Communications Interoperability

Dear Congressman Davis:

The Honorable Kathleen B. Blanco, Governor of Louisiana, testified before your committee on December 14, 2005 regarding Hurricane Katrina. The issue of funding for interoperable communications was raised, and I offer this letter of further information. For your convenience, I have attached a copy of the chart supplied to your Committee which reflects the amount of grants received through the Office of Domestic Preparedness (ODP) of the United States Department of Homeland Security (or the predecessor agency) from fiscal year 1999 to the present. The chart also includes an estimate of competitive grant money that may be received in fiscal year 2006.

The Louisiana Office of Homeland Security and Emergency Preparedness (LOHSEP) is the state administrative agency for Office of Domestic Preparedness grants. The Louisiana State Police assists LOHSEP with the administration of the portion of the grants allocated for the state and local governments to purchase equipment.

As you may be aware, the current focus of grants awarded by the United States Department of Homeland Security, Office of Domestic Preparedness, is prevention and response to terrorism. In addition, the guidelines have historically provided that at least 80% of the funds are dedicated to local authorities, and no more than 20% may be retained by the State. While the State is required to insure that the local authorities follow the grant guidelines, the State cannot dictate how the local authorities spend the grant money.

The grant guidelines limit both State and local expenditures to specific allocations within five categories: equipment procurement, training, planning, exercises, and administrative. Each category may contain further limitations.

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For instance, the grant may limit the funds allocated to equipment to designated sub-categories such as personal protective equipment, decontamination equipment, incident response vehicles, medical supplies and/or communication.

In accordance with the guidelines' attention to prevention and response to terrorism, the focus of the State of Louisiana has been to enhance the capability of state and local first responders in regard to chemical, biological, radiological, nuclear and explosive (CBRNE) related incidents.

Nevertheless, acting within the grant guidelines, in the past 6.5 years, \$15,906,999 in ODP grant funds have been expended for interoperability (\$1,269,840 by the State and \$14,637,159 by local governments).

To clarify the chart reflecting grant moneys received from the Office of Domestic Preparedness, United States Department of Homeland Security (or the predecessor grantor), since fiscal year 1999, the State of Louisiana has received \$135,065,086 in total awards, of which \$108,274,392 has been awarded to local governments, and \$26,790,694 to the State. It is estimated that an additional \$35,298,392 will be received in ODP grant funds for fiscal year 2006; thus the sum of \$170,363,186 reflected for "total funding" on the chart.

Of the \$135,065,086 in current grant funding, \$106,873,872 is allocated for equipment purchases and the remaining \$28,191,214 is allocated for planning, training, exercises, and administrative costs. The amount expended for equipment purchases as of December 14, 2005 is \$48,213,765.

In addition to the level of funding, there are two limitations in the grant guidelines that render achievement of true interoperability at the state level virtually impossible. First, for Louisiana to achieve true interoperability, the initial acquisition cost for infrastructure and equipment is \$552,680,423, which must be supplemented by \$10,150,000 in recurring operating costs. For a state, such as Louisiana, that has never received more than \$50,000,000 in ODP grant money in any given year, and which has now lost one-third of its economy, true interoperability is unaffordable.

Compounding the issue of inadequate funding, is the grant requirement that local governments receive a minimum of 80% of the funds, coupled with the inability of the State to direct these expenditures. By virtue of the grant guidelines, the State cannot control how the local governments spend the grant funds. The current grant funding and restrictions are not consistent with this nation's goal since 9-11 of achieving true interoperability for all emergency responders in every community.

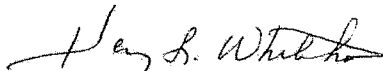
A more sensible approach, which acknowledges the importance of interoperability would be to restrict grant funds to interoperable communications with the State as sole grantee, under the proviso that the State must include all Parishes, and also any municipality having a population of over 100,000 within the system.

The State would be encouraged to include all emergency responders within the system. Once true interoperability has been demonstrated and achieved, the restrictions on funding should revert to prevention and response to natural disasters and terrorism at both the state and local levels.

Louisiana has long recognized the need for a totally interoperable communications environment that would permit local, state and federal emergency services agencies to communicate. A plan has been developed by the Louisiana Totally Interoperable Environment (LATIE) user group which provides a statewide plan to achieve communications interoperability for all of the emergency response disciplines identified by the United States Department of Homeland Security. The Louisiana proposed solution includes voice, data and image interoperability. We request your support for Louisiana to achieve true interoperability.

I thank you for this opportunity to assure the committee that Louisiana is working diligently to enhance the communication capabilities of our state and local first responders, and ask that this letter be filed of record as part of Governor Blanco's testimony.

Sincerely,



Henry L. Whitehorn, Colonel
Superintendent
Louisiana State Police

Attachment

cc: Terry Ryder
Nick Gachassin

ODP Grant Dollars Awarded to Louisiana and Expended on Interoperability

ODP Grant Name	Total Funding Amount	Interoperability Expenditures To Date	Percent Interoperability Expenditures
FY 1999	904,000	198,156	21.9%
FY 2000	1,175,000	308,526	26.3%
FY 2001	1,228,000	182,009	14.8%
FY 2002	5,331,000	1,289,581	24.2%
FY 2003 I	9,451,000	2,177,141	23.0%
FY 2003 II	21,698,692	5,803,437	26.7%
FY 2003 UASI NO	6,228,661	2,599,092	41.7%
FY 2004 SHSP	27,951,001	2,184,997	7.8%
FY 2004 LETPP	8,296,000	1,078,765	13.0%
FY 2004 UASI NO	7,110,625	74,601	1.0%
FY 2004 UASI BR	7,151,362	10,693	0.1%
FY 2005 HSGP	17,579,253	-	0.0%
FY 2005 LETPP	6,428,817	-	0.0%
FY 2005 UASI NO	9,305,180	-	0.0%
FY 2005 UASI BR	5,226,495	-	0.0%
FY 2006 HSGP est.	10,990,600	-	0.0%
FY 2006 LETPP est.	6,400,000	-	0.0%
FY 2006 UASI est.	17,907,500	-	0.0%
	170,363,186	15,906,999	9.3%

Remaining ODP Grant Dollars Awarded to Louisiana (State and Local Awards)

ODP Grant Name	Total Funding	Dedicated Equipment Funding	Remaining Equipment Funding	Percent Remaining
FY 1999	904,000	904,000	-	0.0%
FY 2000	1,175,000	1,175,000	-	0.0%
FY 2001	1,228,000	1,228,000	-	0.0%
FY 2002	5,331,000	5,331,000	-	0.0%
FY 2003 I	9,451,000	6,865,570	-	0.0%
FY 2003 II	21,698,692	17,346,481	1,395,947	8.0%
FY 2003 UASI NO	6,228,661	5,501,630	974,604	17.7%
FY 2004 SHSP	27,951,001	20,987,328	15,542,367	74.1%
FY 2004 LETPP	8,296,000	8,104,830	2,844,963	35.1%
FY 2004 UASI NO	7,110,625	4,766,764	4,289,305	90.0%
FY 2004 UASI BR	7,151,362	3,522,872	3,220,631	91.4%
FY 2005 HSGP	17,579,253	13,281,581	13,281,581	100.0%
FY 2005 LETPP	6,428,817	6,233,476	6,233,476	100.0%
FY 2005 UASI NO	9,305,180	7,444,144	7,444,144	100.0%
FY 2005 UASI BR	5,226,495	4,181,196	4,181,196	100.0%
FY 2006 HSGP est.	10,990,600	8,792,480	8,792,480	100.0%
FY 2006 LETPP est.	6,400,000	5,120,000	5,120,000	100.0%
FY 2006 UASI est.	17,907,500	14,326,000	14,326,000	100.0%
	170,363,186	135,112,352	87,646,694	64.9%