

Homeland Security \$\$ Follies:

A Snapshot of Local Anti-Terror Boondoggles



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Compiled by the Office of Rep. Anthony D. Weiner

Introduction

Millions of dollars that are supposed to fight terror are actually going to the very worst kind of pork-barrel programs. Meanwhile, many real homeland security needs – like those in New York City – remain unmet.

A Updated Snapshot of Local Anti-Terror Boondoggles

Nationwide

Program: Highway Watch

Amount: \$63 million since 2004, \$16 million in FY2008

Use: Since 2004, the American Trucking Association has received funding to conduct anti-terrorism and safety awareness training for highway professionals. Training is administered in a classroom or via online, DVD, videocassette or audiocassette.

(Politico, January 24, 2008)

Rolette County, North Dakota (population 13,903)

Program: State Homeland Security Grant Program

Amount: \$2,789

Year: 2006

Use: Rolette County bought a color laser jet printer under the category "terrorism incident prevention equipment."

(Bismarck Tribune, September 12, 2007)

Cheboygan County, Michigan (population 27,282)

Program: State Homeland Security Grant Program

Amount: \$22,800

Year: 2002

Use: The county purchased an emergency response vehicle to tow an emergency response trailer. However, the county emergency management director was using the vehicle for daily commuting, which is a violation of the DHS Program Guidelines. The vehicle had no markings to identify it as an emergency response vehicle.

(Department of Homeland Security Office of Inspector General Report, (OIG-08-26) February 2008)

Gila County, Arizona (population 52,209)

Program: State Homeland Security Grant Program

Amount: \$93,000

Year: 2006

Use: "Gila County rented planes, snowmobiles and a horse to make more accurate assessor maps. Meanwhile, local law enforcement went without protective masks because it was too expensive to certify them."

(The Arizona Republic, June 13th, 2006)

Sheboygan, Wisconsin (population 48,598)

Program: State Homeland Security Grant Program

Amount: \$48,550

Year: 2004

Use: “An airport got \$48,550 for a new tractor-like device that moves airplanes.” The airport Manager said “security officials told him the airport got the tug because the area was hosting a PGA golf tournament.”

(Associated Press Wire, June 13th, 2006)

Princeton, Massachusetts (population 3,522)

Program: State Homeland Security Grant Program

Amount: \$22,335

Year: 2004

Use: Fire department purchased fitness equipment, including Bowflex and Nautilus machines. Princeton Town Administrator said “It's nice to get it, but there's nowhere to put it.”

(Massachusetts Telegram & Gazette, February 25, 2004)

Holbrook, Arizona (population 5,154)

Program: State Homeland Security Grant Program

Amount: \$48,600

Year: 2005

Use: Video surveillance to monitor “potential terrorist targets,” including a park, a water tower and intersections in Holbrook.

(The Arizona Republic, June 13th, 2006)

Port Royal, South Carolina (population 9,848)

Program: Port Security Grant Program

Amount: \$182,080

Year: 2003

Use: Funding went to increasing lighting. Field staff of the United State Maritime Administration and United States Coast Guard concluded that this was a “small, remote facility that receives less than twenty ships per year” and security improvements would have minimal impact.

(Department of Homeland Security Office of Inspector General Report (OIG-05-10) January 2005)

Gloucester City, New Jersey (population 11,482)

Program: Port Security Grant Program

Amount: \$13,906

Year: 2003

Use: Funding provided for encrypted radios. Field staff of the United State Maritime Administration and United States Coast Guard concluded the radios were not needed and perhaps not compatible with federal and state radios.

(Department of Homeland Security Office of Inspector General Report (OIG-05-10) January 2005)

The Homeland Security Transparency Act

There is currently no central depository of homeland security grant information. After the federal government awards state homeland security grants, the money trickles down to local emergency management agencies without adequate reporting back to the Department of Homeland Security about how the money is used. In response, Congressman Weiner introduced the Homeland Security Transparency Act of 2007 (HR 1392).

The bill would require that any government entity that spends federal homeland security dollars to report the use of the expenditure and an explanation of its connection to homeland security to the Department of Homeland Security within one week of the purchase. It would also require that the Department of Homeland Security post all these expenditures on a publicly available website within one week of receiving the information from a grantee.

The THREAT Act

Congressman Weiner has authored the THREAT Act (Targeting Homeland Security Resources Effectively Against Terrorism – HR 911). First introduced in 2004 and again in March 2007, this legislation would cap the number of cities who could receive Urban Area Security Initiative Grants (UASI) at 15. In 2006 and 2007, 46 cities received money under the UASI program. In 2008, the list of eligible cities has grown to 60. Reducing the number of eligible cities to 15 will return the UASI program to its core mission of providing funding to high-threat, high density urban areas.

Prior Homeland Security Reports

Previous reports by Rep. Weiner have documented nearly \$1.4 million of wasteful homeland security spending from across the nation. Some examples include:

- \$200,000 homeland security grant to Dillingham, Alaska (population 2,400) for “downtown” security cameras despite the fact that Dillingham has no roads linking it to anywhere.
- Modoc County, California, used \$3,500 of homeland security funding for small crates and kennels to hold stray animals.
- The Department of Homeland Security gave \$36,000 to the Kentucky Office of Charitable Gambling to prevent terrorists from trying to raise money for their at the state’s bingo halls.
- Madisonville, Texas used a federal homeland security grant to buy a \$30,000 custom trailer for the annual October Mushroom Festival.
- State of South Dakota spent nearly \$30,000 for a paging system for the state fair.