

ORAL
STATEMENT OF

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DEPARTMENT OF HOMELAND SECURITY

BEFORE THE

HOMELAND SECURITY AND GOVERNMENTAL AFFAIRS COMMITTEE

UNITED STATES SENATE

“Nuclear Terrorism: Providing Medical Care and Meeting Basic Needs in the
Aftermath – the Federal Response”

June 26, 2008

Good morning Chairman Lieberman, Ranking Member Collins, and Members of the Committee.

A terrorist attack involving an Improvised Nuclear Device – or I-N-D – like the one described in our National Planning Scenario #1 involving a 10 kiloton device would present a scale and complexity of concentrated destruction that would demand unprecedented cooperation at all levels of government and with the private sector. These scenarios represent the greatest dangers facing the U.S. and have the highest priority for coordinated federal planning, training, exercises, and grant investments.

States and local governments have received \$23 billion in preparedness grants to build all-hazards capabilities. In the past four years alone, fully \$350 million in DHS grant programs has been invested in projects related to radiological and nuclear preparedness, as well as decontamination. We have trained more than 33,000 students in related courses; conducted numerous major exercises, and in 2010 will conduct a National Level Exercise involving an IND.

Our national emergency response system customarily operates on two basic principles: ‘on request services’ and ‘load re-distribution.’ Affected jurisdictions typically request specific assistance to address urgent needs that exceed their capacity. Mutual aid agreements and federal assistance provide the means and procedures to re-distribute the demand across our nation’s robust but highly decentralized emergency response system. While this has been effective, the detonation of an IND could decimate local response and coordination.

We have been hard at work ensuring that our preparedness and response is scaled to these scenarios. FEMA has new authorities and resources, and the National Incident Management System and National Response Framework exemplify how we have recalibrated our plans, policies, and procedures to those ends.

While existing plans are in place today, we are developing with an Integrated Planning System in close coordination with our state and local partners. This system will establish a process to develop federal plans and to ensure their integration with state and local plans. We also are updating the National Response Framework’s Incident Annexes: including the Catastrophic Incident Annex and the Nuclear-Radiological Incident Annex. These plans outline the specific response to a nuclear attack.

Under these plans, FEMA will immediately “push” pre-designated resources to a Federal Mobilization Center or staging area near the incident area and begin key actions detailed in my submitted testimony. Upon arrival, these resources will be redeployed to the incident area and integrated into the response operations when requested and approved by - and in collaboration with – appropriate state or local incident command authorities.

FEMA’s primary responsibility is to work with the affected states to identify needs and to task, through Mission Assignments, the appropriate federal agency to fulfill these needs. We have expanded the use of Pre-Scripted Mission Assignments. In 2006, FEMA had only 44 pre-scripted mission assignments with 2 Federal agencies. Today we have 224 in coordination with 31 federal departments and agencies.

A key mission identified in the NRF is the evaluation, coordination, and delivery of mass care and emergency assistance through FEMA, our federal, state and local partners, non-governmental agencies, the private sector and contract support. Known as Emergency Support Function #6 – or E-S-F-6 – this process provides basic, life-sustaining assistance to individuals, households and household pets affected by disaster. Containment is crucial to avoid spreading the contaminant to the unaffected population and to ensure the safe participation of relief agency staff.

The Departments of Defense; Justice; and Health and Human Services will be responsible for determining if or when individuals and families can or will be evacuated from areas impacted by nuclear attack. DHS is working with all of our federal partners in finalizing a Mass Evacuation Incident Annex. I have provided greater detail on how ESF-6 works in the materials submitted for the record.

In conclusion, let me assure you that FEMA has a sense of urgency and a determined resolve to build on knowledge derived from previous disaster events and federal and state-level exercises. Today, our operations and programs reflect the lessons learned from the past, and are based on a collaborative approach to disaster response and recovery. FEMA and the Department of Homeland Security continue to work with the states and local governments, as well as our federal partners, non-governmental organizations, and voluntary agencies to improve our capabilities and work proactively to protect the American people.

I thank you for the opportunity to be here today, and I am pleased to answer your questions.