Prepared Testimony
of
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Joint Hearing

"First Responder Technologies: Ensuring a Prioritized Approach for Homeland Security Research and Development"

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Introduction

Good morning Chairmen Bilirakis and Lungren and Ranking Members Richardson and Clarke. It is a pleasure to testify before you today on the Department of Homeland Security's Office of Science and Technology's process to develop technologies that support the needs of first responders. I am currently President and CEO of Liberty Group Ventures, LLC and work with state and local governments, as well as corporations, colleges, and universities, on cyber security, crisis management, response, recovery, and community resiliency.

Background

Prior to LGV, I was a partner at Good Harbor Consulting – and developed its North American crisis management practice. In this capacity, I built teams of small businesses, typically run by individuals who had had leadership roles in government, to address critical infrastructure protection and crisis management challenges at the state and local level. The agility

and efficiency of these teams proved to be effective in assessing what was needed at the state level and helping to translate lessons learned to the federal level.

Before Good Harbor Consulting, I worked for Business Executives for National Security (BENS) and focused on the role of the private sector in disaster preparedness and response, as well as examining the role of cyber security in crisis management. I spent time consulting for the California Governor's office on homeland security and also served as a Professional Staff Member on the U.S. Senate Committee on Governmental Affairs (now the Committee on Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs); I was on the team that drafted the infrastructure protection, emergency preparedness, and science and technology directorates of the legislation that created the Department of Homeland Security. I also worked in the White House domestic policy office and the Office of National Drug Control Policy.

My focus, whether working in government, or outside of it, has been how to bring solutions to the local level and how to make the lessons learned at the federal level accessible to those who are responsible for implementing them

every day. In the context of this hearing, I would like to highlight one primary issue, its key challenge, and a proposed solution.

Issue/Challenge/Solution

Issue: How can we translate technologies, tools, etc. that are working in one jurisdiction, at the local level, to other jurisdictions, near and far?

Communities, particularly since 9/11, have done an exceptional job finding the resources to address their local issues – whether it is interoperability among first responders or access to public and private resources during the response and recovery phases of a crisis.

Challenge: The federal government, either through DHS or FEMA, should have a structure in place to survey what is working, across the country, and share best practices, lessons learned, at the local level with other jurisdictions around the country.

Solution: DHS, through S&T, and FEMA, needs to connect to localities – perhaps through the FEMA field and regional offices – to find out what is working and then use federal resources (do not put the burden on the local level to find the resources to share technologies) to take best practices, effective technologies and tools, nationally, so each jurisdiction doesn't have to go through similar trial and error experiences and reinvent the wheel to get to the same solution. DHS should develop a methodology for using successful technologies and tools that are working regionally and/or locally, as a template from which others can build. It is important to note that the template is not a one size fits all approach, but rather a foundation upon which jurisdictions can build and customize to their needs and resources.

Case Study – Arlington Office of Emergency Management

In various capacities over the past three years, I have had the privilege to work with the Arlington County Office of Emergency Management, led by Jack Brown and Charlotte Franklin. Arlington has focused on the role of the private sector in disaster preparedness, response, and recovery – but not in the traditional sense. The County has not recycled the over-used and now somewhat meaningless term, "public/private partnership." The County has turned that phrase on its head by asking the private sector what it needs from

the public sector to do its job. If we look at our understanding of the role of the private sector since 9/11, we can divide it into three phases:

Phase I: Immediately following 9/11, we were concerned if there were enough resources to help respond and recover.

Phase II: During Katrina, we learned that inventory was not the issue and the primary concern, which was quickly assuaged, was whether the private sector would be willing to donate the inventory. The primary challenge then became how do we, logistically and legally, get the resources to where they are needed – and, what is the government's role in facilitating the movement of goods it does not own.

Phase III: We now understand the public/private partnership issue to be supply chain management-based. We know there is enough inventory, and we know the private sector is philanthropic and benevolent and will donate whatever is needed in a crisis. But, what we haven't figured out is how to ensure supply chain management can operate as effectively and efficiently in a crisis state as it does in an emergency state.

Arlington County has taken on this issue in a multi-phase project, which began in January 2011. After convening a Forum with representatives, nationally and locally, from the private, public, and non-profit sectors,

Arlington, through a DHS grant and support from the Northern Virginia Emergency Response System (NVERS), developed a web-based portal that enables citizens to identify where they can donate goods and where they can receive assistance. I am happy to go in to greater detail about the portal, but the key lesson here is what has happened since the portal was developed. Arlington has learned that through other grants, Washington, DC and Fairfax County have each developed a related technology. It has also learned that Florida and Louisiana have developed a similar web-based system. What is remarkable is that it appears that all of these were developed with government funding, and with limited, if any knowledge, of the others. What is also important to note is that one of the jurisdictions that has developed this technology offered to sell the platform to another jurisdiction 400 miles away for $50K. The inefficiency of this system is obvious. Arlington works under the premise that anything that it has developed or discovered through federal monies should be shared without cost and is trying to put the portal on a platform that could be shared, nationally.

This case study highlights the fact that DHS/FEMA/S&T need to understand how its monies are being spent and how to take the successes of those grants to other parts of the country.

Through my experience at the federal, state and local level, the other key issues in this context that are worth noting are:

- When S&T develops technologies, it needs to ensure that it has the input of those who will be using them. Similarly, first responders need to have a formal voice, a liaison or advocate to DHS and FEMA.
- Over the past few years, first responders have become more empowered to develop strategic initiatives for themselves - and they recognize the need for and importance of key issues, such as interoperability of equipment and collaboration across jurisdictional boundaries. First responders know better than anyone that crises do not stop at borders – and they are working hard to integrate capabilities across jurisdictional lines.

As we examine ways to improve current capabilities, we need to focus on:

- Increasing the outreach between first responders and S&T – increasing the connection, communication between those who are developing technologies and those who will be using them. Additionally, this process should not always move in one direction – there are cases where new technologies are developed in response to

needs, as well as scientific discovery; and, there are cases where needs directly inform what technology should be built.

- We must inventory the existing organizations and outreach mechanisms that exist between S&T, FEMA, DHS and first responders and identify the most effective and efficient ways to utilize them. As we explore ways to improve current processes, we understand it is not always about creating new and novel, but often it is about enriching and supplementing what exists and making it more accessible.

Conclusion

As a country, we rely on our first responders every day for disruptions, crises, and disasters of all kinds. One of the key intentions of the creation of the Science and Technology Directorate within the Department of Homeland Security was to enable the nation's top scientific minds to develop cutting-edge technologies and tools to help our first responders do their jobs. A key factor to the success of this idea is the frequent communication and strong relationship between those who are developing the tools and those who are using them. We can get caught up in jargon and technical terms, but, at the end of the day, we need to ask what is needed, how will it be used, and who

can develop it. All of the necessary pieces exist – it is now our responsibility to figure out how to complete the puzzle.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify before you today. I look forward to answering any questions.