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**Testimony for the Subcommittee on Emergency Management and Technology
House Committee on Homeland Security
“Evolving Threats: Security and Safety in a Post 9/11 World”
September 12, 2023**

The Port Authority of New York and New Jersey is a vast multi-modal transportation agency that builds, operates, and maintains infrastructure, including:

- ✓ five (5) airports, including JFK, Newark Liberty International and LaGuardia
- ✓ two (2) tunnels – the Lincoln and Holland
- ✓ four (4) bridges, including the George Washington Bridge
- ✓ the Port Authority Bus Terminal
- ✓ the PATH rail system that connects New York and New Jersey
- ✓ the iconic 16-acre World Trade Center (WTC) complex and
- ✓ the Ports of New York and New Jersey

Port Authority facilities have the unfortunate distinction of being targeted multiple times by terrorists. In 1975, an explosive device was detonated at the TWA baggage reclaim at LaGuardia airport that killed 11 and injured 74. In 1993, a truck bomb was detonated beneath the North Tower of the World Trade Center, killing 6 and injuring over 1,000 people.

On September 11, 2001, the Port Authority lost 78 civilian employees, as well as 37 police officers, who responded to the World Trade Center attacks and helped save countless lives. This was the worst single-day loss of life of any Police Department of the United States.

In 2017, in an MTA corridor at the doorstep of the Port Authority Bus Terminal a would-be suicide bomber partially detonated an IED injuring 4 people, including the suspect.

Two decades after 9/11, the transportation sector continues to be an attractive target of terrorism. Particularly acute are the Port Authority’s high-throughput assets that are vital to the region and the nation, as we operate the largest airport system, the busiest bus terminal, the most traveled bridge and the busiest port system in the United States.

This legacy has resulted in a tireless commitment to safety and security to protect our facilities and those who depend on them. This is evident, as security accounts for 26% of the agency personnel and 26% of the operating budget. Additionally, since 9/11, \$1.7 billion dollars has been invested in capital projects to harden and strengthen existing facilities.

The Port Authority employs a risk-based, multi-layer security approach to protect its employees, customers, and critical transportation assets.

The layers in this methodology include:

✓ **Measuring Risk Through a Layered Assessment Process**

The Port Authority has been proactive in assessing risks, prioritizing vulnerabilities, and developing solutions designed to mitigate those risks. In doing so, we have enhanced both physical and operational security, hardened our assets, and improved agency-wide resiliency.

✓ **Investing in Capital Security Projects and Strengthening Programs**

Utilizing the findings of the agency risk assessment, the Port Authority completed projects that preserve life and safeguard facilities from threats. Such projects include, but are not limited to:

- Column hardening at our facilities, such as the Port Authority Bus Terminal
- Hardening of our underwater tunnels and installation of protective mats. In 2019, the PATH Underwater Tunnel Breach Mitigation Program received a Designation Award from the DHS SAFETY Act office. The PATH was the first rail transit property in the country to receive such a comprehensive Safety Act award.
- Strengthening of suspender ropes, hardening of our bridge towers, and pier fender installations – adding enhanced protection of the George Washington Bridge, Bayonne Bridge and Outerbridge Crossing.
- Bollard installation to prevent the use of vehicle borne **improvised** explosive devices (VBIED).
- Enhancements to airport perimeter fencing and hardening of guard posts.
- Construction and implementation of redundant PATH Train Control Center.

✓ **Utilizing Best-in-Class Security Technology Solutions**

The Port Authority is constantly researching and piloting best-in-class security technology solutions, adding another layer of security to our facilities. In addition to our 8500 plus CCTV cameras, the Port Authority's security technology portfolio includes:

- Robust card access control systems with door alarms at every facility.
- Perimeter intrusion detection systems at our airports and at PATH underwater tunnel entrances.
- Detection devices to help protect against chemical, biological and radiological threats.
- Agency-wide P25 Radio System to ensure seamless internal and interoperability with our local Port District partners.

- License Plate Readers at our facilities
- And most recently – the installation of a gunshot detection system at Liberty Newark International Airport Terminal B.

The Port Authority is also an active participant in the New York City Mayor's Office Security Technology taskforce that was established to foster collaboration with local partners to develop and pilot cutting-edge technology solutions to enhance police and security operations.

✓ **Deploying Police and Security Guard Assets**

The Port Authority has a highly trained police force of over 2100 members that maintain a 24/7 command presence at our transportation facilities. Since 2001, the Port Authority Police department uniformed staff has grown significantly to respond to new terrorism threat landscape.

In addition to routine uniformed patrols, our policing deployments include:

- High visibility counterterrorism teams and Emergency Service Unit patrols
- Explosive detection canine (K-9) unit patrols
- Radiological detection and CBRNE capabilities deployments
- Vehicle checkpoint and commercial vehicle inspections
- Bag, bus and PATH train inspections

The Port Authority Police Department also maintains a presence in 29 Federal, state, and local law enforcement task forces, to include: the FBI JTTF in both New York and New Jersey. We are confident that we are connected to receive important and actionable intelligence and information.

Additionally, we have an important contract security guard force who are trained in behavioral recognition techniques and counterterrorism awareness. These security officers are posted at locations throughout our facilities and staff a 24/7 Security Operations Center.

✓ **Maintaining a Strong Emergency Management Program**

The Port Authority has its own Office of Emergency Management (OEM) that is vital to this multi-layered security plan. The OEM leads our agency-wide business continuity program and execute agency-wide training and full-scale exercises. These training and exercise programs integrate our regional first responders and focuses on the incident command system and unified command principles, active shooter response, rail emergencies, aircraft incidents, acts of terrorism and other natural and human-made hazards.

✓ **Developing and Maintaining Strong Federal, State, and Regional Partnerships**

The Port Authority understands the importance of maintaining strong relationships with our federal, state and local partners. These cooperative partnerships are integral to our intelligence, counterterrorism, security technology, and training efforts. The support received through these partnerships helps us better secure our assets and the information exchange is mutually beneficial to all partners.

In addition to our partner agencies noted above, the Port Authority has strong working relationships with various federal agencies and programs, to include:

- DHS Office of Science and Technology (DHS – S&T)
- DHS Office of Health Affairs (BioWatch Program)
- DOD Defense Advanced Research Projects Agency (DARPA)

These partnerships are essential to information sharing regarding emerging security technologies and have led to the development and pilot of a variety of programs at Port Authority's facilities.

We ask Congress for their continued support of funding to these research agencies to assist with the development and testing of future technologies which aim to increase the effectiveness of detection devices, screening devices, and police personal safety devices.

✓ **Performing Ongoing Quality Assurance and Seeking Independent Review**

To maintain a prepared, unified, and accountable security operation, the Port Authority regularly measures, audits and inspects its programs and systems. These internal auditing programs allow us to proactively identify and mitigate issues and concerns before our adversaries can exploit them.

Additionally, for over a decade, the Port Authority has successfully utilized the DHS SAFETY Act office as an independent third-party to review and validate the effectiveness of our security programs and technologies against industry best practices.

Prior to 2013, SAFETY Act certifications and designations were awarded to individual technologies. The Port Authority in collaboration with the SAFETY Act office, helped redefine the eligibility criteria for awards, and in 2013 we received a groundbreaking SAFETY Act designation for the LaGuardia Airport Security Program. Since then, we have continued to leverage the SAFETY Act office and have received awards for some of the Port Authority's most used and relied upon facilities, including the George Washington Bridge, World Trade Center, and PATH.

The SAFETY Act office has expanded its portfolio of participants to include large private entities such as the National Football and Major League Baseball. Although, the program continues to grow, the SAFETY Act budget has remained relatively flat over

the past 15 years. We would request that Congress continue to support the SAFETY Act program and provide the much-needed additional funding and resources to ensure its continued success.

The Importance of Federal Grant Funding

A critical component to the implementation of this multi-layered security approach is federal grant funding. The Port Authority does not receive tax revenue from New York or New Jersey and relies primarily on revenue generated from facility operations. That being said, and especially considering the COVID-19 pandemic impacts to agency revenue, federal grants are vital to the continuation of our security programs, that can never remain static or, even worse, fall behind against the backdrop of the ever-evolving threat landscape.

In 2023, the Port Authority received \$13.5 million in federal grant funding from the DHS FEMA Transit Security Grant Program (TSGP), Urban Area Security Initiative (UASI), and the Port Security Grant Program. FEMA grant funding has long supported security initiatives to include:

- Counter-terrorism programs
- Police training and equipment
- Cybersecurity programs
- Installations of CCTV and Access Control Systems at PATH, Ports, and the Port Authority Bus Terminal
- Bollard protection initiatives
- Protection of the PATH tunnels
- Building column protection at the Port Authority Bus Terminal
- WTC Transportation Hub security initiatives
- Emergency preparedness training and exercises and business continuity Programs

Furthermore, the Port Authority received \$2 million dollars in grant funding through the DOJ Bureau of Justice Assistance Body Worn Camera program. This funding allowed us to outfit our police department with Body Worn Camera technology that enhances accountability and provide transparency to the communities we serve. We intend to apply for 2024 grant funding through this program to further enhance our training capabilities.

We appreciate Congress' support of federal security grant funding and ask that you continue to fund these vital programs; they are essential to the Port Authority's financial ability to maintain safety and security at our facilities and implement initiatives to address the challenges of the evolving threat landscape.

In closing, I would like to thank the members of the subcommittee on Emergency Management and Technology and our Congressional delegation for their unwavering support that allows us to better serve our employees and customers and better protect our regional transportation infrastructure and all those who depend upon it.



STATEMENT BY

COMMISSIONER LAURA KAVANAGH
FIRE DEPARTMENT OF THE CITY OF NEW YORK

BEFORE

THE HOUSE SUBCOMMITTEE ON
EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT AND TECHNOLOGY

SEPTEMBER 12, 2023

Good morning Chairman D'Esposito, Ranking Member Carter, and all of the members of the Subcommittee on Emergency Management and Technology who are here today.

As Commissioner of the New York City Fire Department, I want to express gratitude to the members of the Subcommittee for conducting today's hearing at the National September 11th Memorial & Museum. Twenty-two years ago, the Fire Department lost 343 members here on this hallowed ground as they raced to save as many New Yorkers as they could from the towering infernos of the World Trade Center. The loss of even a single firefighter shakes the entire FDNY family; losing this many all at once was an unfathomable blow.

In the wake of September 11th, the men and women of the FDNY worked around-the-clock for months at Ground Zero to recover the victims' remains, including their own fallen comrades. The tragedy of 9/11 didn't end on that day. Our members are still dying of illnesses sustained because of the brave and selfless time they spent at the World Trade Center site. Last week, we added 43 names to the World Trade Center Memorial Wall. We are now at the point where nearly as many members have died of World Trade Center illnesses as died in the attack itself.

But as our 158-year history has shown, the FDNY is resilient. I am proud that, despite the great risks involved, FDNY members respond every day to help their fellow New Yorkers. Our ranks today include many legacy members who lost loved ones on 9/11 but continue to serve. There is no better example of that than First Deputy Commissioner Joseph Pfeifer, who, as you just heard, was a Battalion Chief on September 11th, 2001.

One way we can honor those who have fallen is to protect and nourish those who survive. We established the FDNY WTC Health Program in response to the large numbers of survivors affected by WTC-related health conditions, including cancers and lung disease. Every day this program provides our members with the therapies they need: medical monitoring, mental health and physical health treatments, chemotherapies, respiratory medications and organ transplants, all at no cost. In the last 18 months, six members of our Department have received lung transplants, freeing them from constant oxygen therapy and the very real threat of death. And for our responders who now suffer from cancer, our data shows that those receiving treatment through the WTC Health Program live longer than cancer patients in New York State who were never exposed to the World Trade Center. Remarkably, five years after a cancer diagnosis, 86% of responders are still with us today. Despite its success, we are forced to continually fight to maintain funding for this program. In July, the Senate approved necessary funding for the World Trade Center Health Program as part of the National Defense Authorization Act. We are hopeful that the House will approve it as well.

As First Deputy Commissioner Pfeifer poignantly highlighted, one quality that has always strengthened the Fire Department is our ability to learn from experience and improve, and our ability to federal funds is integral to continuing that improvement. The lessons of September 11th – hard-earned as they were – have led to innovation and great leaps forward in our ability to plan, prepare, and execute emergency responses. On a constant basis, we analyze an evolving landscape of threats and hazards. We work with local, state, and federal partners to improve our state of preparedness and the tools that we use to respond. Without federal support, that wouldn't be possible.

Federal Support – Put to Good Use

The FDNY values every dollar of federal funding that we receive, and we work incredibly hard to make sure that the American taxpayers are getting their money's worth. We use federal funding – primarily from Urban Area Security Initiative and Port Security grants – to strengthen the Department and enhance our capabilities so that we can provide lifesaving response and emergency care here in New York City and across the country.

Federal funding has transformed FDNY's training capabilities. Using Department of Homeland Security (DHS) grants, we have created several advanced training facilities. These include a Subway Simulator, a Shipboard Firefighting Simulator, a marine-based Damage Control Simulator, and the Downey All Hazards Collapse Simulator, which includes a decommissioned airplane to create collapse or plane crash environments. We also conduct joint training exercises with local, state, and federal partners. The Counter-Terrorism Rescue Task Force – equipped with federally-funded equipment such as ballistic vests and helmets - trains constantly with NYPD partners so that they are prepared to deploy whenever the need arises.

We also use DHS grants to enhance interoperable communications, and specifically our on-scene situational capabilities. We invest funds to protect our information systems by building capabilities to monitor, detect, and respond to potential threats.

The FDNY is the premier fire department in the country. We are proud that our fellow first responders from across the continent look to us for innovation, and we gladly share our

knowledge and best practices. For example, recently we have received requests from various municipalities about our advanced drone and robotics program. Using federal dollars, we have gone from a single, tethered-drone to a fleet of drones and robotic devices that we regularly use at the scene of emergency operations.

We were the first Fire Department in the country to use a drone, and we have continued pushing the technology forward, working directly with the FAA to improve processes for departments like ours. Whereas we initially used drones merely as static observational devices, we now employ drones and robotic devices as tactical tools, employing infrared cameras to detect heat signatures and maneuverability to use for search and rescue purposes in ways that would be very dangerous or impossible to replicate with humans. For example, in April, we deployed our robotic “dog” to search for signs of life in a parking garage collapse and this summer we used drones to analyze a construction crane that caught fire and dangled 45 stories above 10th Avenue. We also use these devices at routine fires and emergencies on a daily basis.

Thanks to federal funding, the Department has built assets and capabilities that have transformed the FDNY into a regional and national asset.

This includes a 285-member Incident Management Team that manages and coordinates emergencies, including large incidents such as explosions, major fires, and weather events. This concept – which came out of sharing best practices with the Forestry Service in the wake of 9/11 – allows the Department to send talented emergency management and logistics nationally and even internationally to provide immediate assistance where communities are struggling. This

year, the FDNY has deployed members to Idaho to assist with the Ridge Creek forest fire; to Oregon to assist with the Lookout forest fire; and to Quebec to provide assistance with wildfires.

Federal funding and cooperation also led to the creation of FDNY's Urban Search and Rescue Team (USAR) teams and other specialized teams that train to carry out life-saving operations in complex environments such as tunnels, subways, building collapses, waterways, and high rises.

In July, we deployed a USAR team to New England to assist in search and rescue operations during severe flooding. Though we have only just entered hurricane season, FDNY members have already responded to Florida, North Carolina, and South Carolina to assist with Hurricane Idalia. We frequently deploy search and rescue teams around the country following hurricanes.

In recent years, we have sent teams to provide hurricane relief in Louisiana, Georgia, Florida, the Carolinas, Puerto Rico, New Jersey, Massachusetts, Texas, as well as several islands in the Caribbean.

We also use federal funding to purchase vessels for FDNY's Marine unit. The largest boats in our fleet are capable of pumping 50,000 gallons of water per minute, have air filtration and pressurization protection, and are useful for firefighting, water and ship rescue, and hazardous material detection. They assist with securing the waterways around New York and are equipped to handle chemical, biological, radiological, and nuclear (CBRN). These vessels are a regional asset that we use to assist neighboring jurisdictions through mutual aid agreements and requests.

A recent example that some local members of the subcommittee may recall was when FDNY units assisted over several days in resolving a large cargo ship fire in New Jersey. Tragically, two

Newark firefighters died in the line of duty; FDNY members assisted their Newark counterparts in locating their fallen members.

Key Elements of the Grant Process

We are grateful for every dollar of federal funding that we receive, and we appreciate the attention paid to this issue by members of this subcommittee and the Committee on Homeland Security. We believe it is critical to allow grant funds to be used for training as well as for management and administrative costs. There is great value in purchasing tangible, innovative equipment, and we do a lot of that. But as a grant recipient, we also put a priority on making sure that we track and administer grant dollars appropriately and efficiently. We go to great lengths to be good stewards of federal funds, and having the ability to pay grants staff allows us to do that. It's also critical that funds continue to support new training programs and sustain successful legacy programs. Having the equipment is only one part of the equation; the other is being certain that FDNY personnel can expertly deploy it at the appropriate moment, and that is only possible when their training is current and substantial.

I also want to stress the importance of keeping funding tied to risk. The number of cities eligible for UASI funding has grown, and while I would never discourage the government from allocating funds to another city, it is important that areas of the country where the risk is greatest are able to access federal funding to successfully manage that risk.

Cities like New York have a great need for Homeland Security funding, and as I hope First Deputy Commissioner Pfeifer and I have demonstrated today, we use federal funding efficiently and in ways that benefit the entire country.

We greatly appreciate the partners that we have in this room. Your support, and the support of your colleagues in Congress, has enabled the Department to modernize, innovate, and equip ourselves to keep pace with the evolving set of challenges that we face. Sometimes those innovations are the result of very difficult days, but I am grateful to live in a country that works together to ensure that an attack like 9/11 never happens again.



STATEMENT BY

FIRST DEPUTY COMMISSIONER JOSEPH PFEIFER
FIRE DEPARTMENT OF THE CITY OF NEW YORK

BEFORE

THE HOUSE SUB-COMMITTEE ON
EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT AND TECHNOLOGY

SEPTEMBER 12, 2023

A Day We Will Never Forget

Chairman D'Esposito, Ranking Member Carter, and subcommittee members thank you for letting me testify at this historical location about such an important topic.

Twenty-two years ago yesterday, on a bright summer day, I was a Battalion Chief standing in the street with my fire units responding to an odor of gas when suddenly I heard the loud noise of a plane overhead, flying so low that I could read the word "American" on the fuselage. Then I saw the plane aim and crash into the North Tower of the World Trade Center. In a flash, I knew this was a terrorist attack, and thousands of people were in their greatest moment of need.

I was the first fire chief to arrive at the World Trade Center. With my Firefighters and first responders, we looked at the burning North Tower and knew that we were going to the most dangerous fire of our lives. Without hesitation, Firefighters approached me to ask, "Chief, what do you need?" I directed them to "Go up, evacuate everyone, and rescue those who could not get out." Seventeen minutes after the first attack, a second plane crashed into the South Tower. Within the next 60 minutes, a third plane would crash into the Pentagon and a fourth into the fields of Pennsylvania.

Then the unthinkable happened. I heard the loud rumbling sound of each 110-story World Trade Center Towers collapsing to the ground. In the dark dust cloud of crumbled concrete and twisted steel, I could not see the hand in front of my face, and I wondered if I was still alive. In just 102 minutes, our world had changed forever as we witnessed the mass murder of nearly 3,000 people, including 343 of my firefighters, one of whom was my brother.

Lessons of 9/11

In the aftermath, the 9/11 Commission Report identified several critical changes for municipalities to improve intra-agency communications and coordination. The Fire Department embraced the mandate to adapt to the threat of terrorism by enhancing emergency response capabilities. We conducted an in-depth after action review and strategized ways to make improvements. We created a state-of-the-art *Fire Department Operations Center*. Located at FDNY headquarters, it enables senior leaders to manage complex emergencies by seamlessly sharing information and coordinating with local partners like the New York Police Department (NYPD), New York City Emergency Management (NYCEM), and other City agencies as well as state and federal partners.

One significant development from our post-9/11 discussions is FDNY creating a *Center for Terrorism and Disaster Preparedness* (CTDP). Through information gathering, intelligence analysis, and coordination with government partners, the CTDP enables the Department to understand risk better and prepare to respond to terrorist attacks, natural disasters, and extreme events. Members of the CTDP create emergency response plans and develop strategies to prepare for emerging threats. This includes working with NYPD and Emergency Management to establish operational roles and train for terrorist attacks and other complex events.

We have worked diligently to strengthen interagency relationships via training with other agencies. We have bolstered communication, enabling us to share voice, video, and data more efficiently for situational awareness and coordination. This includes frequent engagement with state and federal partners such as the Port Authority of New York and New Jersey, the United

States Coast Guard and National Guard, the FBI's *Joint Terrorism Task Force*, and the Federal Aviation Administration, to name just a few.

Another lesson of 9/11 was the Fire Department's need to increase capabilities and capacity. A good example of this is FDNY's Marine Units for water operations. Before 9/11, our Marine Division was composed primarily of 60-year-old fireboats designed to respond to boat and pier fires along the water. We have now built Marine Operations into a robust fleet of boats of various sizes and capabilities designed for a tiered response to all types of emergencies. We acquired two large 140-foot vessels, two medium-sized 65-foot vessels with more maneuverability, and a variety of smaller boats capable of responding to emergencies. We built our new fireboats to deal with terrorist threats against critical infrastructure like bridges and to be a regional interstate asset. I'm sure you remember the *Miracle in the Hudson* with passengers standing on the wing of US Airways floating in the Hudson River. Our fireboats rescued many of those passengers. We also built up the capability to perform repairs at FDNY facilities, eliminating the need to transport them to distant shops and significantly boosting the time our marine assets are in service and available.

Preparing For Emerging Threats

Thankfully, no subsequent act of terror in New York City has created destruction and devastation on the scale of the World Trade Center attacks. However, as this subcommittee is well aware, the City continues to experience acts of terrorism and mass violence. In recent years, the Fire Department and our partners have responded to multiple terrorist attacks. This has included an individual attempting to detonate a pipe bomb in a narrow subway corridor, a bomb fashioned from a pressure cooker set to explode in a suitcase in the Chelsea neighborhood of Lower

Manhattan, and a terrorist who drove a truck down a crowded bike path, ramming cyclists and pedestrians, and hitting a school bus. Last year, the City experienced a mass shooting on a subway train in Brooklyn involving smoke grenades and handguns that injured 29 people.

Since 9/11, FDNY training has evolved and now includes a focus on responding to active shooter threats. Using federal funding, we created the *Counterterrorism Rescue Task Force*. Select EMS and fire personnel undergo extensive training with colleagues from NYPD. In an active shooter response, the police aggressively subdue the shooters while another police team quickly creates a “warm zone” in which EMS and firefighters provide lifesaving care to victims under NYPD force protection. Patients needing care are then rushed to the hospital. We call this the dual mission of NYPD and FDNY, “Stopping the killing and stopping the dying.”

The threat environment is changing as terrorism evolves with new methods of attack. We analyze innovative threats and prepare to counter them with our security partners through an information-sharing network. FDNY’s *Center for Terrorism and Disaster Preparedness* has written Intel documents and trained members to confront threats such as *Vertical Terrorism* in high-rise buildings where fire and smoke are used as weapons. Potential innovative attacks may also involve targeting large energy storage battery systems. We are working with the private sector to safeguard these facilities.

We have also taken a proactive approach to evolving cybersecurity threats. To do so, we leverage Homeland Security funds to build a variety of in-house resources and tools for security testing, firewall protection, intrusion detection, and prevention. We have also explored ways of conducting incident management for cyberattacks with physical consequences.

Finally, we do not limit our preparation to responding to threats brought on by deliberate acts of terrorism. An integral part of *Homeland Security* that fire departments such as FDNY must confront is one of *Climate Security*. Natural disasters have had devastating effects here in New York and around the world. Recent history has shown more frequent and powerful climate events. During Hurricane Sandy, the Fire Department faced many emergencies across the City. We responded to water rescues, flooding, thousands of downed trees and scattered debris, various medical emergencies, and the largest private dwelling fires in FDNY's history. As luck would have it, I was also the first Chief to arrive at that fire. We have seen recent examples of climate-driven disasters causing widespread destruction, such as the wildfires in Maui, flooding in New England, and similar events in locations all over the country. Municipalities need your help to prepare for these events to reduce the death toll and skyrocketing property losses. *Climate Security* is an essential element of *Homeland Security* that we are incorporating into our preparedness.

In conclusion, I want to thank the Committee for your time and interest in these critical issues. We are here at the *9/11 Memorial Museum* as a sign of resilience to reflect on the past and envision the future so we can enhance the present. Tragic events can be challenging to talk about. But with these stories comes a responsibility to improve response operations to save lives. I am grateful to the Congressional Members here today and your colleagues for ensuring these discussions continue, and for providing departments like FDNY with the tools to do our best in these dangerous times.

Through your support, we will turn traumatic memories into hope and greater national preparedness. Thank you.

**STATEMENT OF REBECCA ULAM WEINER
DEPUTY COMMISSIONER, INTELLIGENCE AND COUNTERTERRORISM
NEW YORK CITY POLICE DEPARTMENT**

**FIELD HEARING ON “EVOLVING THREATS: SECURITY AND SAFETY IN A POST-
9/11 WORLD”**

**BEFORE THE U.S. HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES COMMITTEE ON HOMELAND
SECURITY
SUBCOMMITTEE ON EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT AND TECHNOLOGY**

**9/11 MEMORIAL & MUSEUM, NEW YORK, NEW YORK
SEPTEMBER 12, 2023**

Good morning Chairman D’Esposito, Ranking Member Carter and members of the subcommittee on Emergency Management and Technology. I am Rebecca Ulam Weiner, Deputy Commissioner of Intelligence and Counterterrorism for the New York City Police Department (NYPD). On behalf of Police Commissioner, Edward A. Caban, and Mayor Eric Adams, I thank you for inviting me to testify before your subcommittee today, and I am pleased to discuss the federal efforts that support state and local law enforcement in mitigating the threats posed by terrorism and targeted violence.

Twenty-two years after 9/11, terrorism manifests differently today than it did in the first decade after 9/11, or during the heyday of ISIS’s external operations. Today’s threat environment in New York City is more varied, diffuse, and unpredictable than ever. What has not changed, however, is that the city remains a singularly priority target due to its unique draw of iconic locations, high-profile events, and a vibrantly diverse population. Since 9/11, violent extremists and malicious actors across the ideological spectrum have targeted New York City in over 50 disrupted plots and attacks—from foreign terrorist organizations and individuals they inspire, to adversarial nation states, to domestic violent extremists and lone actors motivated by a wide range of grievances, including racial and ethnic hate, anti-government extremism, and conspiracy theories.

Since just 2020, there have been over one dozen terroristic incidents—to include attacks, disrupted plots, and ongoing threat streams—in New York State, motivated by a wide range of ideologies and carried out by a diverse set of individuals. To cite a few:

- Our federal partners are currently investigating a human smuggling network, including at least one person allegedly linked to ISIS, which facilitated the migration of more than a dozen Uzbek nationals into the United States.
- On New Year’s Eve in 2022, an individual traveled from Maine to attack three NYPD officers with an edged weapon right outside the Times Square security perimeter.
- Last November, the NYPD and FBI conducted a joint investigation into social media posts threatening to conduct a shooting targeting a synagogue. This investigation led to the arrests of two men in Penn Station and the recovery of an 8-inch military-style knife, a firearm with a 30-round magazine, a Swastika arm patch, and a ski mask.

- In a years-long campaign of threats, harassment, and an attempted assassination, an Iranian women's rights activist from Brooklyn has been targeted by a transnational criminal network emanating from Iran. Separately, in the summer of 2022, a New Jersey man allegedly inspired by the Islamic Revolutionary Guards Corps traveled to a literary festival in Chautauqua, New York and attacked--and nearly killed--well-known author and free speech advocate Salman Rushdie.
- In May of 2022, New York State experienced the deadliest racially-motivated mass casualty attack in its history when a white supremacist entered a grocery store in a predominantly Black neighborhood in Buffalo and killed ten people in an attack targeted against the Black community.
- A Staten Island man was arrested in the fall of 2020 for posting death threats against protesters, politicians, and police officers on social media; he had in his possession various weapons including a semi-automatic pistol, a Taser, a crossbow, and an expandable baton.
- An ISIS-inspired man from Texas pleaded guilty to material support for terrorism for activities involving a plot to bomb Trump Tower and the New York Stock Exchange in November 2020.
- In the wake of civil unrest following the police-involved murder of George Floyd, New York City experienced a sharp rise in anti-government extremist violence targeting the NYPD and its infrastructure. Malicious actors intent on harming police officers set fire to NYPD vehicles on multiple occasions. In one case, a man crawled under an NYPD marked van and sliced wires, with the purpose of cutting the brake lines.
- Also during the height of the civil unrest that summer, a Brooklyn resident attacked two NYPD officers on an anti-looting foot patrol, slashing one with a knife and stealing his weapon in an opportunistic assault allegedly motivated by violent Islamist extremism.

New York City has also witnessed a new rise in violence associated with conspiracy theories. Last year, two high-profile acts of violence were carried out by individuals who espoused race-based conspiracy theories—the ambush assassination of two NYPD officers in January 2022, and an attack on the New York City subway in the spring. As we prepare for what may be a highly contested national election cycle, we are cognizant that political violence and anti-government extremism are likely to continue to rise, and that conspiracy theories will play a role in fueling them.

Transnational repression is also rising in New York City, whereby government actors linked to countries like the People's Republic of China and Iran seek to target dissidents and perceived political adversaries. Mere steps from where we sit today, an overseas police station operated clandestinely by the People's Republic of China was recently identified, investigated, and shut down.

Compounding all these issues are public safety risks associated with emerging technology, particularly generative artificial intelligence (AI). Generative AI has begun to profoundly change the way many industries and individuals operate, creating tremendous efficiencies. However, it also offers clear and present risks: the proliferation of disinformation and deepfakes, at scale and at cost; bot-generated and voice-cloned threats, scams, and swatting campaigns; lower barriers to entry for the creation of malware, phishing, and other cyber threat vectors; the provision of targeting and tactical guidance; and even the potential creation of novel illicit narcotics, explosive

compounds, or bioweapons via large language models. Local law enforcement is only just beginning to understand the public safety implications of emerging technology, and generative AI is only one dimension of that challenge.

It is important to note that we cannot keep New Yorkers safe without our critical partnerships in the federal government. We participate in numerous task forces with federal agencies, which are critical to keeping the city and region safe, notably including the Joint Terrorism Task Force. We utilize fusion centers with our state and federal colleagues to share intelligence and thwart crime. Every day, we gather federal, state, and local law enforcement partners to focus our resources on the drivers of gun violence in this city, through our Gun Violence Strategies Partnership.

While these active partnerships with federal agencies are critical, funding our local counterterrorism efforts is equally important, particularly with the competing priorities that stretch the resources of federal agencies today. The NYPD expects to receive about \$123 million in Homeland Security grants from the Federal Government during FY 23. These funds are integral to our public safety mission. When issuing grants, it is critical that the government allocate funds based on risk so they are utilized most effectively. We use these resources to provide equipment and training to our counterterrorism officers, and to support our Critical Response Command, a specially trained and equipped group of officers who regularly deploy throughout the city to detect and deter acts of terrorism and targeted violence. We rely on this funding to acquire Chemical, Biological, Radiological, Nuclear, and Explosive detection equipment to support intelligence analysis preparedness efforts. We depend on it to maintain our Domain Awareness System, which is an important intelligence-sharing tool for law enforcement officers. Any decrease in this funding will imperil our ability to continue these programs that are absolutely critical for the prevention of terrorist attacks and would fundamentally erode our ability to detect and prevent terrorist attacks on the nation's largest city and potentially impact the safety of our law enforcement personnel who protect our community.

Lastly, we wanted to highlight a lesser-known element of our counterterrorism response, which is our partnership with the Federal Parks Service. For years, the Federal Parks Service has allowed the NYPD to house our Counterterrorism Unit, Aviation Division, Special Operations Division, and Emergency Services Unit at Floyd Bennett Field. Grouping these units together in one location allows us to properly train for and rapidly respond to emergency situations where every second counts. Our lease recently expired, and we have been working collaboratively with the Parks Service to extend it. However, no agreement has yet been reached. Our footprint on Floyd Bennett Field is unique, and there is simply no other place in New York City that can provide the same space and access. We appreciate the support that several of you and your colleagues have provided in helping broker an agreement that would allow us to maintain our footprint at Floyd Bennett Field, and we look forward to working with our federal partners to continue and enhance this critical partnership.

Thank you again for this opportunity to testify today. I will be happy to answer any questions you may have.