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U.S. House of Representatives - Committee on Homeland Security

25 Years Later: Evolutions in Federal, State, and Local Counterterrorism Efforts Since 9/11

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Good Morning Chairman Garbarino and Members of the Committee, my name is Greg Ehrie and I am the Chief Security Officer of the Port Authority of New York and New Jersey. Thank you for the opportunity to discuss the Port Authority's security programs and preparedness efforts.

Port Authority facilities have the unfortunate distinction of being targeted multiple times by terrorists. In 1993, a truck bomb exploded beneath the North Tower, killing 6 people and injuring more than 1,000.

On September 11, 2001, the Port Authority lost 84 personnel, 37 of which were Port Authority Police Officers. It remains the worst single-day loss of life of any police department in the United States. Since then, we have lost numerous officers due to 9/11 related illness and there are many who are still in the fight.

This tragic legacy has shaped the Port Authority's unwavering commitment to safety and security. This is evident as security accounts for roughly a quarter of both the agency's personnel and its operating budget. Furthermore, since 9/11, \$1.8 billion dollars has been invested in capital projects to harden and strengthen our transportation facilities.

Twenty-five years later, the transportation sector continues to be an attractive target for terrorism. This threat is particularly acute for the Port Authority, given the scale and significance of the critical transportation infrastructure we operate, including the nation's largest airport system, the busiest bus terminal, and most traveled bridge in the world.

The Multi-Layered Security Approach

Since 9/11, the Port Authority has built a risk-based, multi-layered security program designed to protect its employees, customers, and transportation assets from asymmetric threats.

This approach includes:

- Risk and intelligence-informed assessments to identify threats, prioritize vulnerabilities, and guide capital security investments.
- Capital hardening and protective design programs, including tunnel hardening, bridge and structural strengthening, bollards and other vehicle-threat mitigation.

- Security technology, including an extensive CCTV system with enhanced analytics, access-control systems, perimeter intrusion detection, license plate readers, CBRN detection capabilities, drone detection, interoperable radio communications, and continuing evaluation of cutting-edge technologies.
- 24/7 security operations centers and trained contract security officers who provide an additional layer of observation, behavioral recognition, access control, and incident reporting.
- A highly trained police department of more than 2,100 officers, with high-visibility counterterrorism teams, Emergency Service Unit capabilities, and explosive-detection canine teams. PAPD also participates numerous federal, state, and local law-enforcement task forces, including the FBI Joint Terrorism Task Forces in New York and New Jersey.
- A dedicated Office of Emergency Management that leads incident coordination, training, and full-scale exercises with regional first responders using the Incident Command System and unified command principles.
- A robust cybersecurity program, including a 24/7 Cybersecurity Operations Center, recognizing that physical and cybersecurity are increasingly inseparable in modern transportation systems.

Additionally, we utilize the Department of Homeland Security SAFETY Act program as an independent third-party validation of security programs and technologies. Port Authority facilities and programs that have received SAFETY Act recognition include the World Trade Center, George Washington Bridge, LaGuardia Airport, and PATH.

Recent Regional Events and the 25th Anniversary of 9/11

This year served as an extraordinary real-world stress test for our security protocols, driven by a series of concurrent major events across the New York and New Jersey region. The simultaneous hosting of the FIFA World Cup, Sail 4th, and the America 250 celebrations successfully drew an influx of over 1.2 million additional visitors to the area.

Last week, we gathered to honor and commemorate the 25th anniversary of 9/11. This high-profile event was attended by Vice President Vance, the governors of New York and New Jersey, and several former United States presidents, including Joe Biden, Barack Obama, and Bill Clinton, along with many other dignitaries. Flawless interagency coordination and unparalleled security measures ensured this historic event was among the most protected on record.

Success of these security operations demonstrates what twenty-five years of investment and partnership have produced: a security enterprise that is integrated, intelligence-driven, technologically advanced, and operationalized across jurisdictional boundaries.

How Congress Can Help

Congress has been an essential partner in building and sustaining our security capabilities. We respectfully ask Congress to maintain its support in several key areas.

- Increase federal funding of homeland security grant programs. The Transit Security Grant Program, Urban Area Security Initiative, Port Security Grant Program, and other federal funding have supported Port Authority counterterrorism programs, police training and equipment, emergency preparedness exercises, cybersecurity, access-control systems, facility hardening, and other critical security initiatives. These investments allow state and local partners and transportation agencies to maintain capabilities that protect nationally significant infrastructure.
- Empower states to work with federal partners to perform advanced mitigation against malicious drones. Transportation agencies need timely solutions to support the appropriate response to unauthorized drones impeding transportation operations.
- Continue to support the DHS SAFETY Act program. Independent validation helps organizations measure security programs against best practices and promotes the adoption of effective anti-terrorism technologies and services.
- Protect and strengthen intelligence-sharing and joint task-force capabilities. The ability to move timely, actionable information across federal, state, local, and transportation partners remains one of the most consequential reforms of the post-9/11 era.

Conclusion

Since 9/11, the Port Authority has achieved significant, measurable progress across every layer of our security enterprise. Our facilities are more resilient, our law enforcement capabilities are highly specialized, and Intelligence moves faster. Technology provides tools that did not exist a generation ago. Most importantly, federal, state, and local agencies collaborate in ways that have become routine rather than exception.

On behalf of the Port Authority of New York and New Jersey, I thank the Committee and our Congressional delegation for their continued support of the programs and partnerships that help us protect our employees, our customers, our infrastructure, and the region we serve.