

Jim Butterworth

**Legislative Committee Vice Chair, National Emergency Management Association
Director, Georgia Emergency Management Agency/Homeland Security**

STATEMENT FOR THE RECORD

**On behalf of the
National Emergency Management Association**

**Submitted to the House Homeland Security
Subcommittee on Emergency Preparedness, Response, and Communications**

United States House of Representatives

State of Emergency: The Disaster of Cutting Preparedness Grants

March 15, 2016

National Emergency Management Association
444 N Capitol Street, NW, Suite 401
Washington, D.C. 20001
202-624-5459

Introduction

Thank you, Mr. Chairman, Ranking Member Payne, and distinguished members of the Subcommittee. Mr. Chairman, I do want to take a moment to congratulate you on your new position on the Subcommittee and thank Representative McSally for her commitment to emergency management and public safety. We are looking forward to working with you in this new capacity.

As stated, my name is Jim Butterworth, and I am the Director of the Georgia Emergency Management Agency/Homeland Security. I am here on behalf of the National Emergency Management Association (NEMA), which represents the state emergency management directors of the 50 states, territories, and District of Columbia. NEMA's members, many of whom, like me, also serve as Homeland Security Advisors, are prepared to deal with an ever changing and increasingly complex set of challenges that test traditional approaches to natural and manmade disasters. I appreciate the chance to come before you today to discuss FEMA Preparedness Grants at large and the specific impact proposed cuts in the FY2017 Budget could have on States across the country.

Proposed Cuts Threaten Progress Since 9/11

In early February, the Administration's FY17 budget proposal was released and was met with concern from State, Tribal, and local emergency managers and homeland security officials. Significant cuts are proposed to vital FEMA Preparedness Grants. Overall, these programs would see a cut of 44 percent below FY 2016 enacted levels. The Urban Area Security Initiative (UASI) Program would be cut by 45 percent, from \$600 million for FY16 to \$330 million in FY17. The State Homeland Security Grant Program (SHSGP) would be cut by 57 percent, from \$467 million to \$200 million. Public Transportation Security Assistance would be cut by 15 percent to \$85,000 next year while Port Security grants are cut by 7 percent to \$93 million. It is impossible to imagine a scenario in which those cuts, as significant as they are, do not, over time, affect the operational capabilities at the state and local level.

The proposed cuts are incongruous with the current threat environment. The threat of terror attacks here in the United States continue to evolve and increase. While the country has made significant strides in our understanding of and preparedness for these events, this isn't the time to scale back those efforts. Chattanooga, Fort Hood, Boston, and now San Bernardino all illustrate the need for continued investments in strategic priorities. The Department of Homeland Security recognized the need for funding aimed at addressing CVE and coordinated/complex terror attacks through a new grant program funding in the FY16 Omnibus. By proposing similar funding in 2017, it is clear this investment is not a fleeting effort and we are looking forward to

engaging with DHS and FEMA to better understand how that funding will be distributed, what will be eligible, and how success will be measured.

Emergency managers today, at all levels, must be prepared to deal with an ever changing and increasingly complex set of challenges that test traditional approaches to disaster and emergency preparedness and response. The growing number of novel events that can take unexpected turns has prompted greater involvement by emergency management for its capability, experience, and flexibility to deal with issues as they emerge. Regardless of the amount of funding you push towards new priorities, however, the systems, structures, personnel, and capabilities built and sustained through years of dedicated investments must not be neglected.

- **Homeland Security Grant Program**

Since the inception of the State Homeland Security Grant Program (SHSGP), NEMA has maintained support of these grants as critical resources to help state and local governments build and sustain capabilities to address various threats and hazards. As FEMA describes it, this grant program plays an important role in the implementation of the National Preparedness System (NPS) by supporting the building, sustainment, and delivery of core capabilities essential to achieving the National Preparedness Goal (NPG) of a secure and resilient Nation.

With the introduction and evolution of the Threat Hazard Identification and Risk Assessment (THIRA) process, states are becoming increasingly aware of their risks and creating partnerships with all critical stakeholders involved in addressing these challenges. As the risk assessment process improves, measuring progress towards common goals improves as well. The current process isn't perfect and the National Preparedness Report will continue to be refined over time.

In Georgia, SHSGP is crucial in supporting investments that help us in reaching the NPG and that have now been recognized as best-practice activities. The challenge we now face is ensuring these programs are funded at a level that allows them to continue to serve and protect the state as threats to homeland security and critical infrastructure increase and evolve. This challenge is only compounded by the dramatic decrease in SHSGP funds the state now receives compared to past years. Our funding for FY 2015 is more than an 87 percent decrease from the amount (\$54 million) we received in the highest year of funding. The following are an example of programs in Georgia that utilized the SHSGP funding over several grant cycles to enact many needed and noteworthy programs that did not previously exist in the scale needed, if at all, to address the new threats facing our nation:

- Fifteen multi-jurisdictional regional Urban Search and Rescue (USAR) teams, which give statewide coverage for complicated technical rescues (ex: collapsed

buildings and structures, widespread building and dwelling damage response), and provide command and control capability of disaster response assets for large scale natural disasters or terroristic activity.

- Eight K-9 teams that assist in the recovery of the remains of those who die in natural disasters or terrorist events.
 - Nine law enforcement teams that are trained and equipped to respond to an event where the involvement of chemical, biological, radiological, nuclear, or explosives (CBRNE) would bar unprotected law enforcement from entering the scene.
 - 52 Hazardous Materials Response Teams (HAZMAT) that enable local fire departments to detect, safely respond to, and rapidly mitigate extraordinary chemical events.
 - 16 Bomb Disposal Units (BDU) and Explosive Ordnance Disposal (EOD) response teams, to handle the rapidly increasing threat of bomb and explosive attacks across the state.
 - 41 Bomb Dog Teams, to enable schools, colleges, government buildings and special events to be safely checked and rapidly cleared of suspected explosives.
 - Logistical support for the Georgia Information Sharing and Analysis Center (GISAC) facility, along with salary and IT support for five terrorism analysts and two Homeland Security Information Network (HSIN) coordinators.
 - 19 jurisdictions in the Georgia Terrorism Information Program (GTIP) program, that enables local law enforcement in the highest threat urban areas of the state to communicate and collaborate on terrorist threat activity.
 - Critical Infrastructure and Key Resources (CI/KR) Protection Team– a small team of GEMA/HS employees dedicated to providing site surveys and technical security assistance to identified CI/KR sites in Georgia.
 - 70 local Citizen Corps teams, that have proven valuable in preparing local citizens to be more self-reliant in the first hours after a disaster or terrorist event, thus lessening the burden of first responders.
 - The Georgia Interoperability Network (GIN), where 179 local and disparate public safety radio systems have been given a level of interoperability across the state not before possible.
- **Urban Area Security Initiative**

The Urban Area Security Initiative (UASI) grant program is designed to distribute federal grant funding to an urban region composed of multiple local governments and first responder agencies rather than a single city. Our most critical urban centers are not islands unto themselves and often rely on infrastructure and support mechanisms far outside their city's political boundaries. According to the Government Accountability Office (GAO), the purpose of the UASI program is to support regional collaboration

among local jurisdictions and emergency response organizations in order to build and sustain preparedness capabilities vital to preventing, protecting, mitigating against, responding to, and recovering from acts of terrorism. This regional approach to preparedness is an efficient and effective use of government funding as it discourages an individualistic pursuit of equipment and encourages collaboration in training and exercising.

In the state of Georgia, we work with the Metro Atlanta UASI, to further the goals and objectives of DHS and the state in building an enhanced and sustainable capacity to prevent, protect, respond to and recover from disasters and threats or acts of terrorism in the densely populated and critically vital metropolitan Atlanta area. GEMA/HS serves as a pass-through for DHS grant funding that supports the Metro Atlanta UASI's activities. Its governance is executed in the form of a Senior Policy Group which consists of the Mayor of the City of Atlanta (who serves as Chairman) and the Chairpersons of the County Commissions, which make up its jurisdiction. The Metro Atlanta UASI was originally comprised of the City of Atlanta, Fulton County and DeKalb County, however, in 2009, its jurisdiction expanded to include Clayton, Cobb and Gwinnett Counties to better encompass the region and leverage the capabilities being built and sustained with traditional SHSGP funds.

The separate but critical funding allotment for the Metro Atlanta UASI allows GEMA/HS to leverage more of the traditional SHSGP funding to the benefit of other lesser at-risk, yet still critical, cities and regions across the state - multiplying the effectiveness of both grant programs in enhancing the capability of both urban and suburban public safety.

The Metro Atlanta UASI has built a great deal of capability and capacity with funds from past grant cycles to address the unique homeland security needs of this high-threat, high-density urban area, and to assist the surrounding local governments in the Atlanta region in building and sustaining their vital public safety capabilities. However, funding levels for recent years represents a dramatic reduction in funds compared to what was previously made available. Over the past few years, the Metro Atlanta UASI received approximately \$5 million annually in UASI specific grant funds, compared to a high of more than \$18 million in 2006. These extensive cuts in funding mean that the UASI can only maintain and sustain existing programs, training and equipment; it can no longer make new investments or expand outside the region. Any further reductions will cause a cascading effect on both grant programs, as established programs could no longer be continued at the basic maintenance levels they are at now. If we were the target of a terroristic attack or if struck by a major disaster, failure to sustain these vital programs could have catastrophic effects on the ability of the region to properly protect the infrastructure, economy and the local populace so critical to our state and nation.

Mutual Aid Supports National Response Capability

As explained above, cuts to critical preparedness grant programs impact individual states in substantial ways. Impacts to response and recovery capabilities, however, do not stop at a State's borders. Through mutual aid, facilitated by the Emergency Management Assistance Compact (EMAC), any decrease in funding for building homeland security and emergency management capacity reverberates across the nation. EMAC was the first national disaster-relief compact ratified by Congress since the Civil Defense and Disaster Compact of 1950. Since ratification in 1996, every state, the District of Columbia, Puerto Rico, Guam, and the U.S. Virgin Islands have enacted legislation to become EMAC members. All resources in a state can deploy through EMAC (fire-hazmat, law enforcement, public health, medical, mass care, animal response, emergency medical services, National Guard, public works, search & rescue, transportation, human services, engineering, agriculture & forestry, emergency/incident management).

Coupled with cuts to preparedness grants, the Administration proposed a massive cut to the very platform that supports the sharing of resources across the nation in times of crisis. FEMA's proposed 56% cut of funding to EMAC would effectively roll EMAC back to 2003-2007 administrative levels. The 2008 increase in administrative funds was a direct result of the post Katrina report completed in 2007 by the Government Accountability Office (GAO). Since that time, the EMAC structure has matured and evolved, and has played a crucial role in disaster response to thousands of events.

While the primary focus on EMAC training is interstate mutual aid, EMAC is built upon a state's intrastate mutual aid program and resource inventory. Nationally, states have been working with the resource providers to inventory their resources and capabilities for both intrastate and interstate use and pre-plan the sharing of resources through EMAC, using the Threat Hazard Identification and Risk Assessment (THIRA) process to help identify resource shortfalls. The direct impacts of budget cuts on EMAC are easy to visualize but what is less obvious is the resounding impact these cuts would have across the nation. The National Guard Bureau (NGB) has built their J-3 Operations and Defense Support for Civil Authority (DSCA) around the use of EMAC for the deployment of state National Guard resources between states. EMAC truly is the DSCA backbone within NGB. Without a strong EMAC interface the Guard would have a hard time both deploying resources timely and efficiently thus delaying vital resources to disaster affected areas.

NORTHCOM Director of Military Support (DOMS) process also relies on the EMAC process. DOMS is the Department of Defense's representative on the Catastrophic Disaster Response Group (CDRG). The CDRG is the national-level coordinating group that addresses policy issues and support requirements during a disaster, emergency and/or terrorist event from NORTHCOM.

As this Committee knows, all assets supported in part or entirely with FY 2016 Homeland Security Grant Program funding that will be distributed this year must be readily deployable to support emergency or disaster operations through EMAC. To ensure a “national” system for use of that equipment EMAC is the only solution. The proposed budget cut to EMAC would be devastating for this essential program that facilitates efficient and effective resource sharing across the nation.

Building Capacity with EMPG

While NEMA is concerned with the cuts to critical preparedness grant programs like SHSGP and UASI, we did want to highlight a grant program that continues to be invaluable to the emergency management community. States and locals build capacity and enhance their capability to respond to disasters when they utilize the Emergency Management Performance Grants (EMPG). The FY17 proposal requests sustained funding for this program at \$350 million.

EMPG is the only source of federal funding directed to state and local governments for planning, training, exercises, and key professional expertise for all-hazards emergency preparedness. The money is often used to conduct risk and hazard assessments and support emergency operations centers which are the coordination hubs for all disaster response. The program also provides public education and outreach, enhanced interoperable communications capabilities, and the ability to manage statewide alerts and warnings.

For example, in fiscal year 2015, EMPG significantly contributed to, among other things, planning, exercising, and mutual aid efforts. In total, 1,707 state and 5,733 local plans were developed, maintained, or updated using EMPG funds. EMPG supported 1,143 statewide and 4,756 local and tribal workshops, drills, and functional full-scale exercises, which benefited 96,361 state and 447,707 local participants. Without a comprehensive exercise program to complement the training efforts, the preparedness cycle would be compromised. Support from EMPG is crucial in maintaining mutual aid efforts across the various levels of government. In fiscal year 2014, EMPG supported 6,453 local and tribal and 4,819 statewide mutual aid agreements, memorandums of understanding, and memorandums of agreement with neighboring jurisdictions, non-profit agencies, Volunteer Organizations Active in Disasters (VOADS), and the private sector.

Recipients of this grant continue demonstrating a strong commitment; for every dollar of federal funds invested, at least that much is matched by both grantees and sub-grantees. In the absence of these funds, state and local governments would struggle to maintain the personnel or capabilities necessary to build and sustain an effective emergency management system. EMPG stands as the beacon of Congressional commitment to ensuring communities and states are more

ready to prepare, mitigate, respond, and recover from any number of emergencies and disasters. EMPG does far more, however, than provide funds for planning, training, exercises, and communications. EMPG must continue to be strengthened and maintained through shared investments.

Grants Structure of the Future

Federal funding for homeland security grant programs has decreased by more than 75 percent since the program's inception in 2003, yet the structure remains unchanged. Congress has recognized this continuing disconnect and included language in annual appropriations bills as recently as Fiscal Year 2012 to push for "long-overdue" and "bold" reform of the Federal Emergency Management Agency's (FEMA) administration of its State and Local Programs. (House Report 112-91 accompanying the Fiscal Year 2012 Homeland Security Appropriations bill (H.R. 2017), part of Public Law 112-33; September 30, 2011)

Important improvements have been made to processes for assessing risk and strategic planning, but the current grant program design can no longer achieve the type of accountability Congress demands and support the preparedness capabilities our communities need. Given these ongoing challenges and the current fiscal environment, the need for reform of these preparedness grant programs has never been more urgent. In the Fiscal Year 2013 budget, FEMA provided a proposal to consolidate grant programs into a new National Preparedness Grant Program (NPGP). While not a perfect proposal, it did succeed in fostering a dialogue on our enduring challenges with the suite of 16 separate preparedness grant programs. After unsuccessful attempts in three consecutive budget proposals, the Administration did not include the proposal in their FY17 proposal but some consolidation has occurred over time. The tenants of comprehensive reform, however, remain just as important as they were in 2012.

Since 2003, the grant programs have allocated more than \$40 billion to state and local governments to build and sustain preparedness capabilities. The successful outcomes supported by this investment must be acknowledged. At the same time, the need to better align these grant programs with today's fiscal realities and operational challenges must also be recognized. At their inception, the grant programs were required to address an unknown threat environment after September 11, 2001. More than \$4 billion in funding was made available through state and local preparedness grants in Fiscal Year 2003 alone. In addition to fiscal changes, the environment now incorporates the new "all-hazards" focus stemming from lessons learned after Hurricane Katrina in 2005 and subsequent multi-state disasters. A key lesson from those events is the importance of intergovernmental collaboration and integrating preparedness planning and response activities to ensure unity of effort.

Declining budgets at all levels of government have increased the need to leverage resources and facilitate cross-jurisdictional coordination. We can no longer afford to operate in separate silos. Unfortunately, the current suite of grant programs perpetuates such separations and no longer reflects ongoing efforts to align state and local capabilities with national preparedness objectives.

Today's dynamic threat environment requires a grants program that prioritizes investments based on risk while maintaining state and local ability to sustain prior investments that support national goals. Grant programs must be flexible and agile to address changing hazards and ensure local investments synchronize with statewide and regional priorities.

Duplicative reporting requirements and increased administrative burden under the current framework also diminish return on investment (ROI) as more time and money must be spent on grants administration and management. Comprehensive reform would better facilitate maximum efficiency of taxpayer dollars and better enable accurate measure of ROI over time. This flexibility with accountability can represent the face of these reformed grant programs. For only through comprehensive changes to the existing structures can we achieve a more effective preparedness program for states and locals.

Conclusion

Again, I appreciate the opportunity to address these issues critical to the emergency management community. This Committee regularly affirms support for ensuring preparedness for our nation's vulnerabilities against all-hazards. It speaks volumes, that your first hearing as Chairman of this Committee would be dedicated to the critical fiscal challenges facing the emergency management and homeland security community in these uncertain times.

Regardless of our country's fiscal situation, physical security and economic security are not mutually exclusive. Emergency managers have been absorbing budget cuts at the State level for years and understand they must do more with less on a consistent basis. Under the current risk stature, however, reducing available funds under the State Homeland Security Grant Program could reverse much of the progress our nation spent decades building.

As you develop the Fiscal Year 2017 budget for the Department of Homeland Security, we encourage you to utilize our membership as a resource and continue efforts to build a strong and robust emergency management baseline in our country. Together, we will carry on the initiatives so thoughtfully developed and supported by this Committee over the years.

I thank you for the opportunity to testify on behalf of NEMA and appreciate your continued partnership.