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New York State Division of Homeland Security and Emergency Services
Joint Legislative Budget Hearing on Public Protection
February 4, 2016

Testimony of Commissioner John P. Melville

Good morning. Thank you Chairwoman Young, Chairman Farrell and distinguished members of the Joint Committee.

I am John Melville, Commissioner of the Division of Homeland Security and Emergency Services.

I appreciate the opportunity to discuss with you today some of the good work of the agency over the past year as well as a few of the highlights of Governor Cuomo's public safety budget.

DHSES is charged with an enormous responsibility - which includes an all-hazards prevention, preparedness, response and recovery mission. The Governor's budget provides the resources needed to accomplish our mission and protect public safety. Total appropriations are \$1.5 billion, up \$583 million over last year. \$600 million is added in the event of future disaster. A reduction of \$3.2 million in one-time appropriations for citizen preparedness, reduced need for capital financing in the amount of \$15 million, and the addition of \$1.3 million for an expanded counter-terrorism program, all contribute to the change.

Unfortunately, this past year our Nation witnessed an increase in the number of terrorist attacks and plots – *three here in New York alone*.

The most recent example was the New Year's Eve Rochester arrest – which ultimately proved to be an intelligence and operational success.

In December, Governor Cuomo stated that the threat of terrorism is a 'new normal' for Americans. Unfortunately, I have to agree.

Let me discuss some of the efforts we are undertaking to ensure the safety of New Yorkers – from Montauk to Buffalo.

This past year, the Governor launched the "See Something, Send Something" mobile application so that people can report suspicious activities.

To date, it has been downloaded over forty thousand times.

In addition to community-level awareness, we have to arm our first responders with the intelligence information they need to keep pace with emerging terrorism trends.

The Governor outlined a plan to consolidate the Division's intelligence and analysis function into the New York State Police to continue their work at the New York State

Intelligence Center, which serves all law enforcement and public safety agencies throughout the state.

This will allow DHSES, as a primary consumer of the intelligence, to focus on key preparedness activities and will be used to inform our decision-making in the areas of grant funding, the homeland security strategy and target hardening.

Ultimately, the collective goal is to provide quick and actionable intelligence to our local law enforcement and public safety partners who, along with vigilant private citizens, truly are the first line of defense.

The Governor also proposes \$1.3 million in funding to drastically increase the number of vulnerability assessments, or *red team exercises*, DHSES will execute across the state.

In conjunction with Operation Safeguard activities and our "See Something" campaigns, we want to increase the State's collective detection capacity of tactics that may be used by terrorist in pre-operational planning.

DHSES' Red Team will then test through a series of adversary-based assessments to determine the success of the preparedness strategy.

As a target-rich state, New York continues to rely on federal homeland security funding.

In 2015, New York State received over \$262 million from the Homeland Security Grant Program, which has been used in communities throughout the state to prevent, protect and prepare for terrorism and other catastrophic events.

The Division continues to advance the State's preparedness posture for *all* hazards, including natural disasters.

Last August, the Governor announced a new incident management system called "NY Responds" to establish a uniform electronic system to be used throughout the state and by all counties.

We completed the first phase of the transition in December with a full implementation expected to be completed this year.

We also continue our recovery work which includes the reimbursement of over \$5 billion to New York communities for Sandy, Irene and Lee rebuilding and resiliency projects.

Last year the Governor announced the first-in-the-nation College of Emergency Preparedness, Homeland Security and Cybersecurity at the University at Albany.

To date, 159 students have enrolled in the College's minor program and, by Fall of this year, the major program should be available as an official offering.

The College also leverages the network of resources of the State Preparedness Training Center in Oriskany for out of classroom hands-on training.

The SPTC is quickly being recognized as a world class facility.

The U.S. Departments of Defense and Justice chose the SPTC to host the annual Raven's Challenge which is an Interoperability Exercise to test the capabilities of bomb squads and military explosive ordnance disposal units.

It was such a success that, this May, New York will once again host the Raven's Challenge at the SPTC.

Moving to Citizen Preparedness training, in conjunction with the National Guard, the Red Cross and together with our partners in the legislature, we have been able to train a total of about ninety-thousand people.

Last year, the Governor announced that the Office of Fire Prevention and Control would be deploying 19 trailers equipped with firefighting foam to local fire departments and county HazMat teams on the Foam Task Force.

Prepositioning this equipment ensures the State is well prepared to confront fires caused by crude oil and other highly flammable substances.

Finally, the Division's Office of Interoperable and Emergency Communications is modifying its approach to the State's interoperable communications grant distribution strategy.

This year, there will be two separate programs: One will include a formula based distribution and the second includes a targeted distribution of \$20 million towards statewide interoperability.

While not possible to cover all the great work of the Division during my testimony today, I hope that I have provided you with an idea of the priorities for DHSES into this next fiscal year.

These include strengthening response integration and coordination, intelligence-driven target hardening, training and thoughtful investments of state grants to bolster the State's preparedness and response posture.

I appreciate the opportunity to appear before you today and I am pleased to answer any questions you may have.