

**TALKING POINTS FOR SECRETARY MICHAEL CHERTOFF
U.S. DEPARTMENT OF HOMELAND SECURITY
WHITE HOUSE COMPASSION IN ACTION ROUNDTABLE
MAY 19, 2008 – WASHINGTON, D.C.**

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

- Jay Hein, Director, WH Office of Faith-Based and Community Initiatives

REMARKS

- Thank you all for attending. It's important that we do everything we can to further incorporate faith-based and community organizations into our national preparedness, response, and recovery efforts.
- I'd like to thank the faith-based and community organizations here today for all that you do to help Americans in need during disasters.
- The President's vision for the Faith-Based and Community Initiative is built on the conviction that we will be far more effective at addressing the great challenges we face when government works in close partnership with nonprofit organizations that are serving on the front lines.
- As we've seen so clearly in recent years, disaster response and recovery is certainly no exception – and I'm proud to say that our Department is building on this vision both to strengthen the work of faith-based and community organizations and to expand greatly our collaboration with them.
- Bringing key stakeholders together in this type of setting is a great way to achieve quick results.
- Unfortunately, time is not on our side:
 - We're in the middle of a very active tornado season;
 - Start of hurricane season is quickly approaching on June 1st;
 - And the tragic disasters in Myanmar and China earlier this month remind us of the unpredictability of Mother Nature.

- The good news is we've already made a lot of progress in several areas, building on lessons learned from Hurricane Katrina.
- Indeed, the White House report on Katrina Lessons Learned specifically emphasizes the importance of faith-based and community organizations in emergency preparedness and disaster response efforts:
 - “Often, [faith-based organizations and] other non-governmental organizations are the quickest means of providing local relief, but perhaps most importantly, they provide a compassionate, human face to relief efforts.”
- Our own Homeland Security Institute, which will be highlighted here today, also found that faith-based and community organizations undertake a surprisingly large, varied and demanding set of activities with extraordinary effectiveness. We want to do everything we can to integrate them into our planning and our execution before, during, and after emergencies.
 - Over the past three years, we have applied these lessons in several ways, including a strengthened and retooled FEMA.
 - We have added experienced personnel; revised the National Response Framework to more effectively utilize voluntary organizations; the NRF now includes a Volunteer and Donations Annex; focused on preparedness/leaning forward.
 - Within the Gulf Region, we've also partnered with numerous faith-based and community organizations assisting in recovery and rebuilding efforts, from Catholic Charities and the Southern Baptist Convention to the Urban League and United Way, as well as a vast array of individual places of worship.
 - These groups can be credited, in large part, with the sustainable non-governmental efforts that are furthering recovery and rebuilding. Leading this effort on behalf of the federal government is Federal Coordinator for Gulf Coast Rebuilding, Major General Douglas O'Dell, who serves as the point of contact for our important work with faith-based and community organizations in the Gulf.

DHS Center For Faith-Based and Community Initiatives

- Per the President's direction, we also established the DHS Center for Faith-Based and Community Initiatives in 2006.
- First under Keith Rothfus and now under John Kim Cook's leadership, this office has worked to expand partnerships with many of the NGOs here today.
- Now located under the FEMA Administrator, John's team has been instrumental in identifying gaps, working through obstacles, and increasing participation and partnership between faith-based and community organizations and the Department. Let me give you a few examples:
 - They have hosted numerous half-day emergency preparedness workshops to bring together faith-based and community organizations to partner with State and local emergency management officials in specific urban areas, including Tampa, Charleston, Miami, Houston and Denver. Nearly 1,000 participants have attended thus far. The workshop will be featured in six additional cities later this year.
 - Participated in nearly 30 outreach meetings around the country to provide emergency preparedness information and ensure that faith-based and community organizations are included in our decision-making process.
 - Collaborated with the National Voluntary Organizations Active in Disaster (VOAD) as well as state groups in DC, Northern Virginia and Maryland, to clarify policy issues relating to the involvement of faith-based and community organizations in disasters.
 - Informed hundreds of non-profit stakeholders about upcoming opportunities for grant funding as well as the release of the revised National Response Framework.
 - And they continue to work with Citizen Corps, the President's premier community preparedness and resiliency program, and our Ready Campaign to encourage faith-based and community organizations to get more involved in preparedness at the local and state level. John's

office has truly helped implement one of my major priorities, developing a Culture of Preparedness.

Role During California Wildfires and Recent Tornadoes

- They also have played a direct role during actual emergencies, including the California Wildfires last year and the recent tornadoes in the Midwest
 - During the California wildfires, they partnered with FEMA's Community Relations teams to meet with dozens of faith-based and community organizations in the aftermath, helping to provide information to members of the clergy and chaplains on Individual Assistance programs and how to apply for governmental and non-governmental assistance.
 - They also worked through FEMA's Voluntary Agency Liaisons (or VALs) to identify faith-based and community organizations supporting the shelter and feeding efforts.
 - They supported the VALs to help organize Long-Term Recovery Committees, which are often comprised of many faith-based and community organizations to provide long term assistance to individuals and families affected by the fires.
 - Just this past week, the VALs and Community Relations teams have been on-site both in Oklahoma and Missouri to assist with response and recovery efforts. Faith-based and community organizations are an important part of their outreach efforts.

Broader DHS Interactions with Faith-Based and Community Groups

- Beyond our efforts at FEMA, the Department is also working in a number of ways with faith-based and community organizations.
- For example, our Office for Civil Rights and Civil Liberties has reached out and engaged with many faith-based and community organizations on security and preparedness issues, particularly in the Arab, Muslim, Sikh and South Asian Communities in our post-9/11 world.

- US Citizenship and Immigration Services also maintains a community relations program that works directly with faith-based and community organizations.
- TSA has worked with community leaders in the Sikh community in refining its security screening procedures for headwear. TSA also has worked with community leaders in the Jewish and Muslim communities in providing cultural awareness briefings for our Transportation Security Officers on significant religious events and movements.
- During the 2008 Passover holiday, Protective Security Advisors from our Office of Infrastructure Protection visited 82 major Jewish facilities across the United States to help inform them of the threat posed by terrorism and to provide a channel of communications between facility owners and operators and the Department.
- The PSAs continue to work closely with members of faith-based and community organizations, including the Anti-Defamation League, Jewish Community Centers and the Secure Community Network – who I know presented earlier today – as part of their regular mission to assist State and local officials to identify and protect critical infrastructure and key resources.
- Finally, our Office of Infrastructure Protection (IP) has conducted vulnerability assessments and reports on religious facilities. We have coordinated buffer zone plans and site assistance visits for over 40 faith-based organization facilities, offering recommendations for enhanced security and best practices. We've also provided \$300K in grant funding to State and local law enforcement to improve the overall security posture of the regions surrounding the facilities, and strengthened locally-generated protection plans.

MOVING FORWARD

- Despite these efforts, there is much more to do. Things such as credentialing, logistics management, establishing NGO best practices and long-term services are all challenges we must work together to overcome. The key, of course, is collaboration.

- The bottom line is this: we have tremendous capabilities at every level – federal, state, local, and private sector – and faith-based and community organizations bring tremendous resources and personnel to the table. The challenge is to more effectively coordinate them to help people in need.
- These issues won't be resolved overnight. But by continuing to work together we can enhance our ability as a nation to prepare for, respond to, and recover from disasters. This is a partnership, and we must all work together. Thank you again for the work you are doing to touch people's lives in such a significant manner.