

Matsui Requests DHS Briefing om New Risk Assessment Standards for UASI Program

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February 7, 2006

Tuesday, February 07, 2006

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Washington, DC - Congresswoman Doris O. Matsui (CA-5), concerned about the new eligibility criteria for the Urban Area Security Initiative (UASI) grant program, sent a letter (PDF) to Homeland Security Secretary Michael Chertoff requesting a classified briefing on how the new guidelines were determined. Because of these new criteria, Sacramento's ability to apply may be terminated. Additionally, the Congresswoman asked that members of the Sacramento region also be invited to attend.

The text of the letter follows:

February 7, 2006

The Honorable Michael Chertoff
Secretary
U.S. Department of Homeland Security
Washington, D.C. 20528

Dear Secretary Chertoff:

The Department of Homeland Security (DHS) recently released a list of 35 urban areas considered eligible to apply for funding through the FY 2006 Urban Areas Security Initiative (UASI) grant program. Eleven additional areas, including Sacramento, the Congressional District I represent, were notified that their UASI funding may be terminated in future years if the Sacramento Urban Area does not meet the new risk assessment standards. In response to that release I wrote to your office on January 10, 2006, requesting further clarification regarding Sacramento's risk assessment. I am writing again, this time to formally request a classified DHS briefing addressing the new risk assessment standards, specifically regarding threats, assets and vulnerabilities relating to the Sacramento region.

As I noted in my previous letter, I am deeply concerned that the new assessment process omits numerous sites of critical infrastructure and possible terrorist targets in the region. Sacramento has a growing population of almost two million people and has much at risk should a terrorist attack the area. The city lies just miles downstream from the Folsom Dam. If the dam was to be breached hundreds of thousands of lives and billions of dollars worth of property would be at risk. Additionally, the majority of neighborhoods and business districts sit behind levees, which should be considered, as well as a host of other transportation and critical sites that I believe should be factored in.

Based on the recent list of 35 urban areas considered eligible, I have serious concerns about the scope of what is included in the assessment. It is crucial that Members of Congress have the ability to review the new eligibility guidelines for the UASI program. I therefore respectfully request a classified briefing from DHS and ask that any other Members of Congress from the Sacramento region also be invited to attend.

I appreciate your attention to this request and look forward to hearing from you.

Sincerely,

DORIS O. MATSUI

Member of Congress

cc: Pamela Turner, Assistant Secretary for Legislative Affairs, Dept. of Homeland Security; Chief Albert Najera, Sacramento Police Department; Ray Kerridge, Interim City Manager, City of Sacramento; The Honorable Heather Fargo,

Mayor of Sacramento; Terry Schutten, County Executive, Sacramento County

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