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King Charges DHS with Responsibility for Unspent Transit Grants

GAO Report Shows that DHS Bureaucracy is to Blame

Washington, D.C. (Monday, May 17, 2010) – Today, five days after the Obama Administration slashed homeland security funding for mass transit and ports in New York City, U.S. Rep. Peter T. King (R-NY), Ranking Member of the Committee on Homeland Security, called on Department of Homeland Security (DHS) Secretary Janet Napolitano to immediately eliminate delays caused by DHS -- and its components FEMA and TSA -- which have prevented \$421 million as of 2009, as well as an additional amount of as much as \$348 million as of 2010, in awarded transit security grant money from being spent by transit agencies across the country.

According to a [2009 report](#) from the Government Accountability Office (GAO), from FY2006 to FY2008, delays in spending this vitally needed transit security money were “largely because” of DHS bureaucracy and red tape. (See page 30)

King’s call for a fix comes three days after Napolitano sent a late Friday afternoon letter to King seeking to rationalize the Obama Administration’s massive funding cuts to New York by noting that a portion of the money awarded by DHS for mass transit and port security in recent years has not yet been spent by New York.

King said: “In her letter to me very late Friday afternoon, Secretary Napolitano seemed to be accusing New York of sitting on piles of cash from past homeland security grant awards instead of spending the money to protect the city from terrorist attack. Her accusation is ludicrous. **As the GAO report shows, Secretary Napolitano and her department bear the responsibility for the fact that transit agencies in New York and elsewhere are unable to spend much of their mass transit security grant money. She is blaming New York for a problem that lies at her own feet.** The Obama Administration slashing New York’s mass transit security funding by 27% and port security funding by 25%, then attempting to blame New York is like slapping New York in the face twice in one week. The Obama Administration must provide sufficient federal funds to New York, the top target of al-Qaeda, and Secretary Napolitano must immediately end the delays

and fix the broken process of distributing mass transit security grant money to ensure that it can be put to work quickly and protect lives against terrorists. Secretary Napolitano has been on notice for nearly a year; she must take action now to get this security funding flowing to the agencies that need it.”

The problems reported by GAO have affected the flow of money to New York over the last several years. In a *Nesday* story yesterday, Jeffrey Soffin, spokesman for the New York Metropolitan Transit Authority, said, "Any money that was supposed to come to us that we haven't spent is held up by [Homeland Security]."

The problem at DHS is recognized on a bipartisan basis. Rep. Bennie G. Thompson (D-MS), Chairman of the House Committee on Homeland Security noted that the GAO report “illuminates several key areas where DHS must improve its management of the Transit Security Grant Program so that transit agencies receive grant funding in a timely manner and have the flexibility to maximize their limited resources for enhancing transit system and passenger rail security.” ([Click here to view Chairman Thompson’s statement.](#))

Last week, the Obama Administration announced that under the Transit Security Grant Program, DHS this year will provide the New York City area with \$111 million, which represents a 27% (\$42 million) cut from last year’s funding of \$153 million. Under the Port Security Grant Program, DHS this year will provide the NYC area with \$33.8 million, a cut of 25% (\$11.2 million) from last year’s funding of \$45 million.

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