



## REMARKS BY FBI DIRECTOR ROBERT MUELLER TO THE U.S. CONFERENCE OF MAYORS SUMMIT ON EMERGENCY, SAFETY AND SECURITY

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**MR. MUELLER:** (Applause.) Good morning, and thank you. Thank you for having me here today.

As **Mayor** Morial indicated, I started as FBI director on September 4th, and more than one person has come up to me and said, "You had a relatively short honeymoon." And that would be accurate.

I want to thank -- before I go further, I want to thank you for your leadership, **Mayor** Morial, **Mayor** Menino, **Mayor** Hamstead (sp), **Mayor** Garner, and Executive Director Tom Cochran, and for having the foresight and the wisdom to call this important meeting, and for giving me the opportunity to join with you today. I want to thank all of you, all of you out there, for the outstanding leadership that you're providing to your cities and to our country. And at this pivotal -- I think it fair to say, at this pivotal moment in history, you have been towers of strength in your communities. And I particularly want to thank you for your extraordinary support, your cooperation and your guidance that you provided to the FBI during these past six weeks.

This morning I want to let you know how deeply committed the FBI is to working with you to ensure the safety and security of your communities now and in the future. The FBI, as you have read, and as you individually probably know, is pouring its heart and its soul into the investigation of the September 11th attacks. And every resource that can be deployed is being deployed; every person who can be utilized is being utilized. We now have well over 7,000 FBI personnel involved, and that's about one in four of our employees. And we're examining every scrap of evidence. In fact, we've gathered, sometimes working on hands and knees in the rubble and mud of crash sites, more than 3,700 separate pieces of evidence. This is easily the largest and most comprehensive investigation in our history.

But beyond the investigation itself, our overriding priority right now is prevention -- making sure that terrorists do not succeed in striking America and America's cities again. Now, it may well be overly optimistic to think that every single attack can be prevented, but we can certainly give it everything we have got, and that is exactly what we are doing.

We at the FBI are not new to prevention. With your help, over the last few years we've had

successes. An example, perhaps, would be two years ago when we foiled a plot to blow up a gas tank in Sacramento, perhaps saving as many as 12,000 lives.

But historically, we have been better at tracking down terrorists after the fact than at stopping them in their tracks before they strike.

And we have, in the past, not always aligned our resources, our strategies and our skills specifically towards prevention to the degree that they are now so aligned.

A few weeks ago, we established at FBI headquarters a Terrorist Prevention Task Force made up of representatives of a dozen different agencies. Its goal is to identify and stop future terrorist acts with proactive investigations, and to attempt to predict and to prevent future scenarios. As an aside, the work of this group, for example, has led us to heightened sensitivities on crop dusters in the latter part of September.

We have had in the past, and do today, have 35 Joint Terrorism Task Forces located in your cities and other cities across the country. Those task forces are working hard to gather intelligence and pursue any hint of a lead that might help us identify terrorists or their associates.

We also have beefed up our resources overseas, where many of the leads have taken us, and where we're getting some outstanding cooperation from England, Germany, France, Spain and a number of other countries. We're also working with you and other colleagues at the federal, state and local level to shore up security at critical public events, and to protect critical infrastructures like water and transportation systems.

We are assessing threats in real time and providing warnings to your cities and to the nation. And I must tell you that the threat level remains very high. More attempts and possible attacks are a distinct possibility. This possibility requires all of us to continue walking the fine line of staying alert on the one hand, without causing undue alarm on the other hand.

Clearly we are deeply concerned about the growing wave of anthrax attacks and related incidents. At this point it is not clear if the few confirmed anthrax exposures were motivated by organized terrorism, but these attacks were clearly meant to terrorize a country already on the edge. We're responding swiftly to each and every incident.

By way of background, we usually are involved in 250 assessments and responses relating to weapons of mass destruction a year. We've handled more than 3,300 in just the past three weeks alone, including 2,500 involving suspected anthrax incidents. And even though most turned out to be false alarms or hoaxes, we are taking each report seriously, as I know each of you in your cities are also. And those who are pulling pranks and hoaxes won't find our severe response to those all that funny.

Our work in these investigations, of course, has been supported at every turn by you and your colleagues across the nation, as well as by a host of federal, state, and even international partners. From the first moment that I joined the FBI several weeks ago, one of my highest priorities has been to improve our working relationship with you -- with elected leaders and law enforcement

partners around the world. And the events of September 11th have only strengthened my resolve in that regard.

I have, from my experience, and am now even more convinced that no one institution is strong enough to tackle the challenge of terrorism alone. No one agency or entity at any level, whether it be federal, state or local, has the length or the breadth of talent and expertise. We must work together. Law enforcement, quite simply, is only as good as its relationships.

Now, these past six weeks have given me a good opportunity to see how well our FBI supports you and your cities, and I've seen encouraging signs. I know that many of our special agents in charge, our SACs, as we call them, are reaching out and keeping you involved and informed. But at the same time, I heard that there are some areas where lines of communication aren't as open as they should be, where we're keeping you at arm's length, and where we're not affording you the level of support you deserve. As soon as I heard of these issues, I reached out to key law enforcement leaders and asked them to educate me on their issues and their concerns, and I asked them to give it to me straight, and they did.

In building on these initial conversations, I held a series of meetings last week with representatives of the Major City Chiefs, the International Association of Chiefs of Police, and the National Sheriffs' Association. And along with the attorney general, have met with a number of other similar law enforcement associations.

The meetings were helpful, open, candid and, I think, productive.

What we heard will likely be familiar to many of you. We heard that the FBI is always calling on your local police professionals to track down leads; that we're sometimes not following up quickly enough on leads that come to us that involve your cities; that you need information digitally, if at all possible; and that the FBI isn't giving you specific enough information on threats, and that we're even withholding information.

Let me start and clarify the last point, the point about specific information on threats and withholding information. The FBI is not withholding significant information due to security concerns. The fact is, much of the information we have can be released to law enforcement. But the fact is also that often on most occasions our information is simply not as specific or developed as we would all like it to be.

One issue that has come up, and that is our ability to distribute to your law enforcement agencies what we call the "Watch List." The issue was raised as to why it could not be put into NCIC and distributed to you digitally. We now have done that. We've added that Watch List to the National Crime Information Center list, or NCIC. But by the same token, we often do not have much more than names or aliases. As we get confirmed photos or other information, we will add them to the system.

There's another point I do have to emphasize, and that is when it comes to the electronic arena, the FBI is often far behind you and your colleagues. Overhauling our electronic infrastructure is a major priority for us, one that we are addressing now.

Beyond these few clarifications, I must say that many of the concerns that I heard were valid, and we are stepping forward to address them.

I've asked the special agents in charge, in cities where we don't already have a Joint Terrorism Task Force, to get one up and running quickly. While these task forces aren't a panacea, they do break down stereotypes and communications barriers, more effectively coordinate leads, and help get the right resources in the right places. In short, they are an excellent tool for melding us together in ways that make information sharing a non-issue. I've also asked the SACs to coordinate leads with local law enforcement wherever and whenever possible.

I've invited law enforcement leaders to identify individuals, two or more, who can work with us in our Strategic Command Center at the FBI headquarters on the national investigation. And I've asked that representatives be added to our Prevention Task Force.

I'm also exploring with the leaders of law enforcement the possibility of establishing a working group composed of officials from the FBI and local law enforcement, that could identify other specific issues and find workable solutions.

Now, in my mind, these are some initial first steps, and more will follow. Some issues may need to be addressed through legislation. And as we move through this process, I only ask that you please bring any problems or issues to our attention. I want to know what you're experiencing, how the FBI is treating you. And you can be assured that we will, and I will, respond.

In the coming months, we'll continue our work to strength and modernize the FBI. We had some changing to do before September 11th, and that need has only intensified since the tragedy of that date.

We at the FBI, as well as state and local law enforcement, clearly have got to become more proactive and more prevention-oriented. We need to be able to look down the road five or 10 years and gauge what's coming and start adapting now. We've got to look closely at our skill sets to see if they are tracking where we need to be to cope with the 21st century and crime in the 21st century. We've got to rebuild our electronic infrastructure and digitize our information systems. And of course we've got to continue building a stronger, more seamless and more supportive relationship with you and with law enforcement and with emergency responders nationwide.

These are my priorities for the coming months, and I welcome any advise, insight you might have. And I welcome and appreciate your continuing support.

As difficult and as trying as these times are, I have a great deal of confidence and optimism about the future. We will get through this challenge as we've gotten through every other, and we will get through it by leaning on each other, by falling back on our bedrock values, by tapping into the deep reservoir of determination, strength and courage that exists throughout America. And together, I'm confident that we can keep our cities safe and strong and continue to make our country a shining example of freedom for the world.

And I want to thank you and bless you and the cities for which you are responsible.

(Applause.)

**MAYOR MORIAL:** We want to thank Director **Mueller**. We're going to take a few questions. Then we're going to have to adjourn. We're going to have to depart this room so that they can set up for lunch. So let's take a few questions. Right here in the front.

**DIR. MUELLER:** Yes, ma'am.

Q Director **Mueller**, could you comment on the investigation --

**MAYOR MORIAL:** Wait a minute, not for the press. No. **Mayors**.

**DIR. MUELLER:** Just the **mayors**.

**MAYOR MORIAL:** **Mayor** King. We have a press conference for you later.

**DIR. MUELLER:** Sorry about that. (Laughs.)

Q First time -- is this on? First time a **mayor** has outranked a member of the press at one of these. (Laughter.)

**DIR. MUELLER:** I wouldn't be so sure. (Laughter.)

Q Oh, I would. (Laughter.)

Mr. Director, first, my name is Scott King. I'm **mayor** of Gary. Along with **Mayor** O'Malley of Baltimore and **Mayor** Griffin from Reno, we've been asked by our president, **Mayor** Morial, to work up on a task force to see where we might be able to mutually strengthen federal and local particularly law enforcement cooperation.

And I first want to express, personally, that I think your performance in your first six weeks, under the baptism of fire you've endured, has really, really been honorable. In fact, it's to such a level that should the time come when you leave the Bureau, you're probably good material to become a **mayor!** (Laughter.)

**MR. MUELLER:** (Chuckles.) Thank you, sir.

Q In particular, though --

**MR. MUELLER:** I look forward to that day! (Laughs; laughter.)

Q You should! You should!

But one of the things that we've developed as a task force is a belief, we think founded fairly objectively on fact, that we do not have an adequate existing, whether you call it protocol, whether you call it management system, to facilitate, to best facilitate day in, day out, ongoing, back-and-forth communication, federal/local law enforcement.

We've heard -- you've made some statements, some recommendations, which I think are well received. We also will be submitting, as a result of this summit, some specific recommendations from our perspective. Now, obviously, we want you to have the opportunity to study and review those, and we appreciate your pledge of further dialogue.

What I'd ask, though, is on behalf of my colleagues, is your commitment, as director of the Bureau, to engage with us, to work with us as the Conference of **Mayors** to look and see where we can improve upon and create a system that's going to work throughout the nation, throughout all of the municipalities represented here and by this organization, and create a management protocol that will if not guarantee, at least improve our ability to have this kind of coordination effort.

So we're just asking for your view and commitment to working with us to try and develop this.

**MR. MUELLER:** Absolutely. You have my commitment to work to better the relationships, to better the exchanges with state and local law enforcement, and indeed, with **mayors**.

I have a lot to learn, not only about the Bureau, but about law enforcement in general, and learn about how we can do things better. And I am open to any suggestions. I know I've heard from **Mayor** O'Malley some of these items, and I've heard from other law enforcement some of the issues that I addressed today, and I want to listen and address them. I cannot promise you we will always agree on the solutions, but nonetheless, there ought to be a continuing dialogue.

If I can make one point in terms of protocol, I believe in those cities where we have Joint Terrorism Task Forces, they are an excellent operating structure in most the cities in which they have operated in the past, where long-standing relationships have been developed between state and local law enforcement and the FBI. And that, for me, is the model of how we work together closely to accomplish some of the goals that we've laid out today.

**MAYOR MORIAL:** **Mayor** Moore, and then **Mayor** McCrory.

Q Thank you, **Mayor**.

Mr. Director, we certainly appreciate you being here and have a great appreciation for the modernization you said you're putting in place with your infrastructure.

One of the major concerns we have in our local community, and I'm from the city of Beaumont, Texas, is the fact that through communications with the local office, they will call in law enforcement from throughout the area of southeast Texas, but often, they forget to be inclusive of the fire chief or the emergency directors in terms of what the plans are or what's going on so they can be at a higher alert than normally.

We would like for that directive to come from you to be inclusive of these individuals, because when you talk about first-responders, those are the individuals that have to handle the problem once the problem is there, and it's not just law enforcement alone that need the assistance. We need the information as well.

**DIR. MUELLER:** Yes, sir. Let me talk a little bit about that generally and more specifically about threats. Where we have received a specific threat in a particular city or a particular part of the country, regardless of how credible we may think that threat is ultimately, we have reached out and contacted the state and local law enforcement, and often the **mayor** or the governor, where we have the specific threat. And if it is a threat that requires a certain response -- for instances an anthrax threat is different than the threat of an explosion -- we have brought in those individuals who are responsible in the local community as first-responders to that type of threat. And consequently, I do believe that where we have specific threats and where there is needed expertise, whether it be at the federal, state or local level, the special agent in charge has reached out to bring in those special areas of expertise. However, it would not be useful to have the CDC sitting at the table, the Center for Disease Control, when you're responding to a, for instance a threat of an explosion.

We will continue to try to keep you informed as to the specificity of the threat and to bring in everybody in the state and local community as well as the federal community who might contribute.

**MAYOR MORIAL:** **Mayor** McCrory.

Q Pat McCrory, **mayor** of Charlotte, North Carolina.

**DIR. MUELLER:** Sir.

Q One question we have, and I think this was in a joint phone call that we had last week among the airport task force and the economic task force, and that is the FBI general alerts. We are walking that fine balance as **mayors**, the balance between freedom of access, freedom of our economy continuing to be productive and also security.

We had some very strong reaction to the FBI alert that came out a week and a half ago by the media, then the public. Schools weren't sure how to react. Emergency operations weren't sure how to react. Since that FBI alert a week and a half ago, have there been any reconsiderations of how to be more specific or actually put a timetable on those types of alerts so we can reassure the public of their safety and their need to continue to be productive in our communities?

And again, thank you for your leadership.

**DIR. MUELLER:** I think that is -- you focus on a very difficult issue for all of us. Where we, as we had a week ago Friday, receive credible -- information from a credible source that an attack will come within a specified period of time, but without any specifics as to the target or the specific time or the place or the individuals, we are in the posture of having to, we believe, alert

you to this information.

Now, what we could have done better, I believe, is to put out the information to our SACs earlier so that they could contact state and locals and say, "Look, this alert is coming out."

Whether or not we made the right decision in putting out the alert, I don't know if we would ever know. It is conceivable, although there is no evidence necessarily to support it, that the advent of the anthrax attacks is what this source was talking about. But I must emphasize, there is no evidence -- as I've said in my talk, there is no evidence to support the presumption at this point that the anthrax attacks were a result of organized terrorism.

So --

**MAYOR MORIAL:** One more quick question. Chief?

Q Director, I'm Chief Ron Palmer from Tulsa, Oklahoma. We met previously.

**MR. MUELLER:** Yes, sir.

Q I'm also the vice president of the Major City Chiefs. We will be meeting next week at the ICP.

I'd like to say to you a couple of things -- one, reiterate what has been said here this morning, that the local law enforcement remains the frontline of defense for this country. In my case, I'm most encouraged by the local Tulsa FBI Office, and the Oklahoma City FBI Office, in helping us look at the particular issues pertinent to Tulsa. And I guess I would ask you, as you continue about talking to local law enforcement, that you make this consideration; that we have a great need at our own local level for us to be not only involved in the national threat, terrorism, but also, more specifically, the leads that pertain to our own communities. And if your officers and your agents can be sensitive to that, I know it would be most appreciated.

**MR. MUELLER:** As I think I indicated, I have requested the special agents in charge to work jointly off of those Joint Terrorism Task Forces, in running out leads together with state and local law enforcement. As law enforcement well understands, it is important to know and document what leads have been run out and what results there are. So there has to be some mechanism to assure that we know what we have done. And in my mind, as I've said before, the Joint Terrorism Task Forces are a good vehicle to do that. And they're also a good vehicle to utilize all resources -- state, local, whether it be law enforcement or other -- in running down leads.

**MAYOR MORIAL:** **Mayor** Street, do you want to ask a question?

Q Thank you, yes.

**MAYOR MORIAL:** This will be the last one.

Q Thank you so much, Director, thank you so much for being with us. And we appreciate your

commitment to communicate with us. And we do hear these complaints. Commissioner Timoney, our police commissioner, does a wonderful job in our city, but he complains that a lot of information goes up and we don't get a lot coming back. And we appreciate your commitment to work on this.

But we need help. We need resources. Our budget is literally being terrorized by the additional costs of providing safety for people who live in the city and who travel and visit our city. We have the Liberty Bell and we have Independence Mall, we have these great national artifacts, and it represents a serious challenge. And we want to cooperate, we want to do our part. How do we pay for it? How do local governments, how do our cities, whose budgets are already stretched, who are affected in a huge, huge negative way by the downturn in the economy -- and I'm talking about the economy wasn't really all that good even before September 11th -- how do we pay for this? How do we enhance our capacity, your capacity, and be able to do it in a way that meets the challenge without driving cities further and further into a financial hole? And we need help on that. Talk to us about how we coordinate our efforts and how we pay for those efforts.

**MR. MUELLER:** Well, I wish I had the answer to that question. I think what we can do is work closely together on the Joint Terrorism Task Forces. I will tell you that when we send out an alert, as was sent out a week and a half or two weeks ago, I am sensitive to the fact that this is going to make a change in what your law enforcement does on a day-to-day basis. I am sensitive to the fact that in sending out an alert like that, we are -- in many of your cities there will be more overtime; officers will go 12 on, 12 off; you'll reduce leave. And I am sensitive to that.

On the other hand, what we need to do, in my mind, is be scrupulously honest with you and put out those threats. We do not want to be in a situation of holding something back only to have something happen in one of your cities and be in the position of your saying, "Hey, Mr. **Mueller**, why didn't you tell us this?"

And so I'm sensitive to the financial commitments that are made by you when these threats come out. I wish I had an answer on how we could lighten the financial load in each of your cities. But I am not an expert in that area.

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