



THE FLORIDA SENATE COMMITTEE ON DOMESTIC SECURITY

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Senate's Website: www.flsenate.gov

March 9, 2005

Mr. Michael Chertoff
Secretary
U.S. Department of Homeland Security
Washington, DC 20528

Dear Secretary Chertoff:

The Florida Senate Committee on Domestic Security requests your attention on a matter of great importance to our state and the nation. Our committee is very concerned about the Department of Homeland Security decision to remove the greater Orlando area's Urban Area Security Initiative (UASI) designation. This area is a vital component of Florida's economic well-being and is the number one tourist destination in the United States of America.

While we are pleased that the Miami, Tampa and Jacksonville areas received the UASI designation, and we recognize the importance of those areas' critical infrastructures to national security, we would ask that the human and economic factors in the Orlando area be considered, as well. The area easily meets the criteria related in the newly published National Infrastructure Protection Plan, is a high density population area with multiple large venue vulnerabilities and a very high threat-based target rich environment for any type of CBRNE attack.

The resident population of this area is approximately 1.7 million with a per square mile density of 1028 persons. The resident population grows at a rate of over one thousand new adults per week. The Orlando area represents one of the world's largest tourist and convention destinations, with more than 43 million visitors per year from all parts of the world. Orlando is the eleventh largest port of entry for international visitors in the United States. In addition to the increased daily population caused by visiting tourists, there are added problems with the fact that visitors are not familiar with local emergency preparedness procedures, and local hospitals must deal with much higher, and less predictable, surge capacities based on any given day's census in the region.

As you know, several large theme parks, recreation areas and sports venues are located within the urban area of Orlando. In close driving proximity to the urban area, the Kennedy Space Center, Port Canaveral, and the Daytona Speedway are all located within the State of Florida's

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Region 5 Domestic Security Task Force response area. These venues, as well as the theme parks and other recreational activities in the area all rely on the Orlando urban services area to provide emergency preparedness and response capabilities. These specialized recreational venues are estimated to draw over a half million visitors each week, with total visitor population to the area estimated at over 800,000 per week when conventions and other business activities are included.

In addition to the economic vulnerability of this region, you are no doubt aware of the military presence at Cape Canaveral, Port Canaveral and Patrick Air Force Base within this area. Each of these military assets can benefit from a robust prevention and response capability in the Orlando urban area.

We would respectfully request that a more complete review of the risk components present in the Orlando area be completed for the purpose of re-evaluating the department's decision to rescind the UASI designation. Our state and local planning and response agencies stand ready to assist your agency's evaluators in reviewing the aggravating factors and unique interdependencies that make this area such a rich target and one of such concern to us as policymakers.

Thank you for your consideration in this matter and we look forward to working with you and the Department of Homeland Security throughout your tenure at the agency.

Best Regards,

Senator Alex Diaz de la Portilla, Chair
On Behalf of All Members of the Committee

CC: The Honorable Tom Lee, President of the Senate
The Honorable Jeb Bush, Governor
All Members of the Florida Congressional Delegation