

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

June 13, 2007

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

Dear Secretary Chertoff:

I write regarding the Urban Area Security Initiative (UASI), and specifically, the current Philadelphia UASI region. Recently, the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) has sought to take a more regionalized approach regarding homeland security grants, and has urged states and localities to work together to develop regional plans to tackle homeland security challenges. However, a regional approach should reflect the realities facing all relevant communities and take into account the specific needs and risks faced by the entire region. In the case of the Philadelphia region, I am concerned that this is not the case.

Communities in southern New Jersey, which are not included as part of the Philadelphia UASI area, are closer to Philadelphia's key targets than some of the surrounding areas in Pennsylvania that are included in the UASI region. Whereas four Pennsylvania counties that surround Philadelphia and stretch to more than 50 miles from the city center have been included in the region, New Jersey cities such as Camden and Gloucester City, which sit just two miles across the river, have not been included in the UASI region. These areas in New Jersey share the same waterway and major bridges as Philadelphia, and are in close proximity to the fourth largest port on the East Coast and a major international airport. New Jersey communities across the Delaware River from Philadelphia would be undoubtedly affected by an attack on any of Philadelphia's infrastructure, and would be an integral part of a response if an event were to occur. Yet the exclusion of these areas from the Philadelphia UASI region means that they are not receiving federal UASI funds, and therefore do not have the necessary resources to prepare for and participate in a regional homeland security response.

Given the shared responsibility of these New Jersey municipalities, and the proximity of these areas to Philadelphia, it seems that this UASI region is one that begs a true regional approach. Yet, when the Department created the initial urban areas eligible for UASI, it did not include any southern New Jersey cities in the Philadelphia region. For the Fiscal Year 2007 homeland security grant process, DHS has given urban areas more authority to define and change the boundaries of the UASI regions. However, due to the precedent set by DHS not including any of the surrounding New Jersey cities in the initial Philadelphia UASI region, it seems unlikely that this would change without DHS' involvement.

Therefore, I urge you to include these New Jersey communities in the Philadelphia UASI region and ask that DHS work with Philadelphia to include nearby New Jersey communities in the Urban Area Working Group that makes the key decisions for the region. In addition, I respectfully request an explanation of the current scope of the Philadelphia UASI region, and why the region is allowed to include counties that are 50 miles west of Philadelphia, but does not include communities that are two miles east across the river.

I look forward to working with DHS to implement these changes to the Philadelphia region to ensure that the intent of the UASI region is upheld, and that communities facing the same threats have the resources to protect their residents.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Robert Menendez". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long horizontal stroke at the end.

ROBERT MENENDEZ
United States Senator