



## Senator Feinstein Calls on Attorney General to Award Interoperable Communications Funds to Communities

February 24, 2005

**Washington, DC** – U.S. Senator Dianne Feinstein (D-Calif.) today urged Attorney General Alberto Gonzales to act quickly to disburse the \$100 million in COPS grants appropriated by Congress last year for interoperable communications.

This funding would allow police, firefighters, and other emergency personnel to better communicate with one another in emergency situations.

Following is the text of the letter Senator Feinstein sent to Attorney General Gonzales:

February 24, 2005

The Honorable Alberto Gonzales  
Attorney General of the United States  
U.S. Department of Justice  
Washington, D.C. 20530-0001

Dear Mr. Attorney General:

I write to call your attention to the fact that the \$100 million in COPS grants for interoperable communications appropriated by Congress last year has not been awarded to communities.

Interoperable communications are vitally important for both traditional law enforcement activities and homeland security preparedness. Los Angeles, for instance, is a major metropolitan area, with dozens of police, firefighting, and emergency medical service agencies that must be able to communicate in times of crisis.

Interoperable communications are especially important for improving port security. The ports are our nation's soft underbelly in the battle to defend our homeland against terrorism. Today, 13 million shipping containers come into U.S. ports annually, and 42 percent of the nation's cargo moves through the Long Beach/Los Angeles port. A dirty bomb could not only damage the Port and likely kill hundreds of thousands of people.

Yesterday, I met with Los Angeles Mayor James Hahn, Los Angeles Police Chief William Bratton, Los Angeles County Sheriff Leroy Baca, Long Beach Mayor Beverly O'Neill, and other local, federal and state officials at the Long Beach/Los Angeles port.

What I found in talking to these officials is that the number one roadblock that they face with regard to homeland security is their inability to communicate with each other.

If police, firefighters, and other emergency personnel are to respond to a catastrophic terrorist attack or natural disaster, they need to be able to communicate with each other and supporting personnel. That's why I'm asking you to take a personal lead in ensuring that interoperability funds are fully disbursed.

Thank you for your prompt response to this important matter.

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