

Michael Byrne: Homeland Security Following 911

Charles Jennings: Our last speaker for the day is Michael Byrne. When I met Michael, he was in the Fire Department, and that was only -- it seems like a long time ago -- but it was only three years ago. And so since that time he's worn a number of different hats. And he's had his fingerprints on a lot of very interesting things because he was involved with GIS with the fire department back in '99 and that's how I first met him. And so it's kind of ironic in his career he can't get too far away from GIS and the fire department. He began his career in public service in 1979 with the FDNY. During his career he's served as a firefighter and company officer. At the 1993 World Trade Center bombing he led Ladder Company 12, responded to the event and his unit received a citation for that. In 1996 he was detailed to the newly created Mayor's Office of Emergency Management here in the City where he held the position of First Deputy Director. Upon his return to the Fire Department in 1998, he served as the director for strategic planning and the Chief Information Officer in the office of the fire commissioner. Mr. Byrne retired from the FDNY after 20 years of service in 1999 and joined the Federal Emergency Management Agency as a response and recovery division director here in New York in Region 2. He held this leadership position and the federal response operations for several disasters, including Hurricane Floyd and Tropical Storm Allison. Immediately prior to joining the Office of Homeland Security, as the senior director for response and recovery, Mr. Byrne served as the deputy federal coordination officer for operations responsible for all federal response assets and recovery program administration in New York City for the attack on the World Trade Center. And so just to clarify that he was with FEMA and involved in leadership of the FEMA action and management picked up very recently in Homeland

Security. So he's going to give us a very brief overview of homeland security, Michael Byrne.

Michael Byrne: Thank you. I will be brief. I understand there are cocktails outside and I'm still enough of a fireman to realize I won't get in front of that thing. Just one brief comment. I was never more proud to have been able to say I was a fireman and a member of the public safety community in OEM in New York City and the way everybody responded at the Trade Center. And I also have never been prouder to be part of the federal government because I think it was a really together team effort on the part of both of all the local, state and federal agencies that responded to this, the collegiality was really something and I'm really pleased that I got to be a small part of that. I think it's appropriate to close out the day to sort of talk about you know new directions. Brad did a good job in laying out the long term recovery, but I think it's also recognized from the policy level from the administration, our country's level, they recognized that some changes needed to be made and some new emphasis needs to be placed on what has now come to be termed an termed homeland security. The Office of Homeland Security was established in early October this year when President Bush signed an Executive Order directing and putting Governor Tom Ridge as the first director of the Office of Homeland Security. I will say working the last three months with governor Ridge, he's the right guy, right time in history and the right man for the job. He's just a really strong individual and he has his priorities straight as far as I believe all the people in public safety will soon see. The Office was created to addressed what was considered to be and had been articulated in a number of reports, there was the GAO report that was done on terrorism

readiness, there was one done by Rudman, there's another one done by Governor Gilmore. And these reports, they are part of the Rand Commission, these reports all spoke to the challenge of coordinating federal assets, coordinating federal response and programs across the myriad of federal agencies that are out there, and that there needed to be a stronger presence, and a stronger coordinating voice and leadership voice for the federal response to this. And that's why President Bush created this office. He recognized that and something that I always remind myself every day as I begin work, is we are a nation at war. And the President has articulated that there are two fronts to this war. There is the war that's going on in Afghanistan right now and there is a war that you and I are fighting every day, here in this country. Very thoughtful thing to say and also something that gives me pause every time I think about it, in the Executive Order, we the task was really, there's three action verbs that run throughout the Executive Order. One is coordinate. Coordination role is a challenging one, but it's one where a lot of different aid programs have been going down to local, state and local governments.

A lot of different agencies have responsibility for different parts of our nation's security. The biggest example I can think of is the borders. There is I think five different agencies, six different agencies that have direct responsibility to border issues. Another verb is to ensure. Okay to take a look and review, the agency thinks that they have in place and to ensure that the best interests of the safety of the country are being taken care of and when they're not, to propose policy changes where required. And lastly to review. To review any new plan that would come out. To review actually we have review authority for the budget for anything that's in the federal budget related to homeland security. And we

actually just went through that exercise these last couple of months reviewing the 2003 budget which will be revealed on February 5th.

A couple of things about the office. The office has two basic structures, there's the organizational structure and then there's the process structure of how we get things done. The organizational structure is divided in half in that the external affairs component which is our congressional liaison public information officers and those important jobs. But then there's the sort of the where a lot of content of what and policy review is done and that's in the side of the house that I fall. Governor Ridge is the director. Directly reporting to him is his Deputy, Admiral Steve Abbott, retired 4 star admiral, another really excellent person. Very, you know I thought I worked hard but these guys definitely put in the time and the effort and he's a great leader for me to follow. And I work directly for him. There are right now there are five directorates that report to Admiral Steve Abbott and I have the one on response and recovery. There are a number of other directorates. There is the protection and prevention directorate. There is a directorate for policy and plans and they are led, policy and plans is led by Professor Rich Falkenrath from Harvard, Kennedy School of Government. And the protection and prevention is by General Bruce Lawler, formerly from Joint Forces Command. Again to superior knowledgeable, the right people, the right job and they're it's a pleasure working with them as we try to move forward.

A little bit about the organization. I have a number of different sub directorates that report to me. Some of them make a lot of sense, some of them are new challenges for me. A

little job this job is a little bit outside the normal comfort zone, but to speak to them, it's easier if you start to understand how the process of homeland security works. The office is set up and designed to mirror the National Security Council. The National Security Council it has the international responsibility for our nation's security. It was seen that a similar type agency would be required, especially under the conditions that we now live for homeland security and that's why we're myriad much like that organization. At the top of that pyramid is the Homeland Security Council which is very like the National Security Council. And those are the principals of the agencies. Essentially most of the cabinet level officials. The Chair of that is the President of the United States and who works alongside of him is Governor Ridge, who is the Director of this office. Directly below that level is what is called the Deputy's Council, and those are the deputies of all of those specific agencies that are in the Homeland Security Council and that is chaired by Steve Abbott, the Admiral. He is as the Deputy of our Agency, he's the Deputy's council. Below that on the pyramid, that's really where it sort of widens out and there are 11 what are called PCCs, or policy coordinating committees. Those PCCs do the day to day work and policy design for our nation when it comes to these things that we're discussing.

I chair four of those committees. I chair the committee for disaster threat, response and into management, WMD consequence management. Training and exercises and lastly, and this is where you know those who know me this is a bit of a stretch for me, is economic consequent management. I could use Brad's help on that one. But fortunately I've been able to recruit some strong people from agencies like Department of

Commerce, Economic Development Agency and they're you know working that issue. Essentially committees are composed of multiple agencies that come in and we review the policies and the guidance that will follow on in terms of directing how the federal government will integrate with the state and local response.

My last comment again because I recognize what time it is, is I just wanted to say a word about the direction we're headed. I encourage all to you know look with anticipation for the President next week with the state of the union and also with the February 5th role out of his 2003 budget. I think you'll see that there is a strong unprecedented commitment by the President and his leadership team to help the local first responders, to help with the you know with the biothreat, to help with the infrastructure threat and to help with protecting our borders and all those aspects of homeland security and I think I hope that you will help us accomplish that mission. The main task that we have before us now now that we've sort of gone through the 2003 budget cycle, is by the summertime the President has tasked us with coming up with and I'm going use this word very, very specifically and that is a national strategy. Notice I did not say a state and local. I did not say a federal strategy but a national strategy to protect the security of our country. And the task before us is to integrate the state, local and federal responses into one seamless national response. It's a daunting task.

We all have our particular issues that need to be resolved, but it is one that has to be done because I think that one of the things I do take positively from 911 is the overwhelming response that took place. It wasn't a question of the lack or desire on the part of people

responding to the Trade Center or to the Pentagon, the challenge, we owe it to the brave men and women who respond to these things to coordinate and to provide leadership and to provide functions and mutual aid agreements and to the type of structure that facilitates their ability to assist in these events, and not the impairment in any single way. Well that's what's on my table and I encourage you all to enjoy the cocktail hour. It was a pleasure getting back to New York today to see a lot of my friends. Thank you.