

United States Senate

August 9, 2017

COMMITTEES:
BANKING, HOUSING, AND
URBAN AFFAIRS
COMMERCE, SCIENCE, AND
TRANSPORTATION
ENERGY AND NATURAL RESOURCES
AGING
INDIAN AFFAIRS
RULES AND ADMINISTRATION

The Honorable Elaine C. Duke
Secretary of Homeland Security
Washington, D.C. 20528

Dear Acting Secretary Duke:

I write to you regarding the Federal Emergency Management Agency's (FEMA) Relative Risk Profile for the Urban Area Security Initiative (UASI). At this time of increased global threats, I request that FEMA properly weigh its Relative Risk Profile to ensure the Las Vegas-Paradise metropolitan statistical area (MSA) receives full and proper consideration for UASI grant funding.

Recent attacks in Brussels, Nice, and London underscore the need for cities to take a proactive approach to emergency preparedness and terror prevention measures. Nowhere are these threats more apparent than on the world renowned Las Vegas Strip. On a given week, the Las Vegas Strip hosts close to a million tourists as it is home to eleven of the largest hotels in the world. The city's dining, conventions, and entertainment make it a destination for global tourists and with this notoriety come threats from terror groups.

In reviewing the Relative Risk Profile 2017 for the Las Vegas-Paradise MSA, I am concerned with how level 1 and level 2 assets are considered under the targeted vulnerability index. Since FEMA clusters the Las Vegas Strip and all resorts into one single asset, I worry the formula discounts the MSA's critical infrastructure and the vulnerability of its targeted infrastructure. Therefore, I request that FEMA consider weighing each individual building as its own asset. This change would more adequately account for the many thousands of workers and tourists that occupy the buildings each day.

Moreover, I am concerned that FEMA does not consider special event assessment rating (SEAR) level events in its formula. Every year, Las Vegas hosts more than 20,000 conventions, including the Consumer Electronics Show (CES), which broke an attendance record with over 180,000 attendees this past January. Many of these highly attended events qualify as SEAR level. Including these types of special events, accounting for their size, attendance, and appeal would provide a more accurate scope of the risk. Especially since a recent propaganda video from Islamic State of the Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) called for lone wolf attacks on Las Vegas.

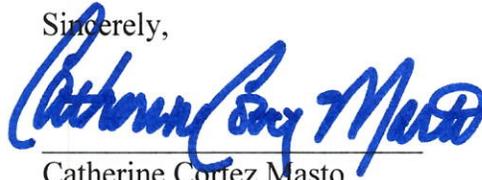
These infrastructure targets align with terrorist ideologies that aim to disrupt or diminish regional economies. Any attack on Las Vegas' tourism industry would be devastating to the thirty two percent of Las Vegas residents that depend on tourism for their livelihoods. This effect is a force multiplier, as lost revenues for tourism trickle down to unemployment, decreased property tax revenues, less money for schools, and loss of revenues for the state.

I appreciate the opportunity to submit my concerns with the UASI formula and encourage you to consider the challenges unique to Las Vegas in its effort to prevent and deter terror attacks.

Ensuring my state has the resources it needs to protect its citizens and its many visitors from potential threats is a top priority. I hope to work with you further to achieve that end.

Thank you for again for listening to these concerns. I look forward to your prompt response.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, reading "Catherine Cortez Masto". The signature is written in a cursive style with a horizontal line underneath the name.

Catherine Cortez Masto
United States Senator