

Chairman Smith and Members of the Committee, thank you for inviting the General Services Administration (GSA) to this hearing and for allowing me to testify. I am pleased to appear before you today to discuss with you the role and responsibilities of the General Services Administration in preparing for and responding to domestic disasters and national security emergencies.

GSA Role and Responsibilities

GSA is assigned specific domestic and national security emergency preparedness responsibilities under Executive Orders 12656 and 12472. The key responsibilities included are to:

- Provide rapid and efficient logistical support and telecommunications;
- Assist client agencies in their recovery;
- Provide support to those Federal agencies assisting victims of disaster or emergencies; and
- Ensure the continuity of GSA operations.

Specifically, Executive Orders 12656 and 12472 require GSA to:

- Ensure that Federally owned or managed domestic communications facilities and services meet the national security and emergency preparedness requirements of the Federal civilian departments, agencies and entities;
- Develop national security emergency plans and procedures for the operation, maintenance, and protection of Federally-owned and occupied buildings managed by GSA;

- Have national security operating procedures for the control, acquisition, leasing, assignment and priority of occupancy of real property by the Federal government, and by State and local governments acting as agents of the Federal Government;
- Develop national security emergency operational plans and procedures for the use of public utility services by Federal Departments and agencies;
- Develop plans and operating procedures of government-wide supply programs to meet the requirements of Federal Departments and agencies during national security emergencies;
- Provide procedures for the use of excess and surplus real and personal property by Federal, state, and local governmental entities in national security emergencies;
- Develop plans, in coordination with the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA), with respect to Federal buildings and installations, to minimize the effects of attack and establish shelter management organizations; and
- Create plans to assist Federal departments and agencies in the operation and maintenance of essential information processing facilities during a national security emergency.

These responsibilities are the same whether there are peace time or wartime emergencies. Unfortunately on September 11, 2001, GSA had our most challenging experience yet in carrying out these responsibilities.

GSA has also been asked to comment on its interaction with the Department of Veterans Affairs in times of national emergency. While the Department of Veterans Affairs has responsibility for the acquisition of medical equipment and supplies pursuant to a delegation of procurement authority, GSA is available to provide whatever assistance the Department of Veterans Affairs or any other Federal agency may need to ensure the provision of medical equipment and supplies during national emergencies.

Response to Terrorist Attack

GSA associates have always been at their best in putting the agencies of the Federal Government back in business following natural disasters, such as hurricanes and earthquakes. In the immediate aftermath of the terrible terrorist attacks in New York City and the Washington, D.C. area, staff from across GSA upheld that tradition on a larger scale than ever before. In accordance with our Continuity of Operations (COOP) plans, GSA immediately activated our New York Region COOP. Our associates literally worked around the clock to produce logistical “miracles” within a matter of days.

In Lower Manhattan, many buildings that had been leased by GSA for occupancy by Federal agencies were heavily damaged or destroyed. For example, one major World Trade Center low rise, located at the base of the Twin Towers and occupied by the U.S. Customs Service, was completely destroyed. In addition,

six major Federally-owned GSA buildings in Lower Manhattan were closed due to loss of power, loss of telecommunications and their proximity to the World Trade Center.

In the Washington, D.C. area, officials at the Department of Defense (DOD) asked GSA to locate, make ready for occupancy and totally equip nearly 850,000 square feet of space. These facilities were needed to provide a place for DOD employees to relocate from many areas within the Pentagon.

The results were extraordinary. By September 17th, six of GSA's Lower Manhattan Federally-owned buildings were reopened for essential personnel of the tenant agencies. By the same date, GSA had negotiated 14 leases totaling approximately 1.3 million square feet of space in New York City and New Jersey. This includes space acquired to house FEMA operations and several displaced agencies. An additional 9 sites (for a total of approximately 700,000 square feet) are being acquired for other tenant agencies that have been displaced or need additional space as a result of the tragic events of September 11th. Remarkably, by September 17th, GSA had also located, outfitted, and prepared for occupancy 850,000 square feet for DOD in Northern Virginia. Shortening a process that usually takes months in either the private or public sector to a few days, GSA was assisting DOD to begin moving in on September 17th.

Also, Officers from the Federal Protective Service immediately began helping evacuate the buildings in New York City and helping people to safety. Within two hours of the first collision, GSA had set up an emergency command center in New York to begin providing affected agencies with the supplies and services needed to restore operations.

Beyond providing space and furniture, and coordinating with the private sector for the replacement of destroyed telecommunications lines and switches, GSA labored extensively to provide many other items and support, including:

- hundreds of vehicles,
- security services,
- computers and servers,
- protective equipment and masks for the rescue workers,
- hauling equipment and tractors, and
- and a full range of many other services for our customer agencies, as well as the FEMA.

In total, GSA has been called upon to provide nearly 3 million square feet of replacement and new space in New York, New Jersey, and Virginia, along with furniture, telecommunications systems, computers and all of the other items that are needed in today's office environment.

When GSA briefed representatives of all the agencies being supported in New York, our representatives received widespread praise and the warm applause of heartfelt appreciation. The DOD summed up GSA's ability to anticipate its needs by stating that "GSA is 4 ½ hours ahead of anything that we can think of". In my opinion, Mr. Chairman, the GSA associates who produced those results are heroes in every sense of the word. I am proud of them.

Mr. Chairman, this concludes my statement. I will be glad to answer any questions that you or the Committee members may have.