



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR
Greg Ball

Chairman Ball: “Our Soft Underbelly is Not Secure.” - First Critical Homeland Security Hearing

GREG BALL April 9, 2011

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New York, NY (April 9, 2011) –Senator Greg Ball (R, 40th District –Westchester/Putnam/Dutchess), Chairman of the Veterans, Homeland Security, and Military Affairs Committee was joined by U.S. Congressman Peter King (R-New York), and New York State Senators including Senator Martin Golden (R-22nd), Senator Jack Martins (R-7th District), Senator Joseph Griffo (R-47th District), Senator Lee Zeldin (R-3rd District), Senator Thomas O’Mara (R-53rd District), Senator Joseph Addabbo (D-15th District) and Senator Eric Adams (D-20th District).

The public hearing titled, "To Consider Opportunities to Improve New York State’s

Homeland Security Operations and How Far We Have Come Since September 11th 2001,” included testimony from over 15 speakers on a wide range of topics. Representatives from city and statewide police organizations, private security firms as well as national security experts gave testimony on where New York State is the most vulnerable.

Unveiled at the hearing, were bombshell revelations about a lack of basic protections and staffing at key locations, and possible targets, like the George Washington Bridge, the Lincoln Tunnel and the Holland Tunnel, (See Redacted Statements, Attached).

In response to this testimony Ball stated, “These hearings were critically important in investigating a wide range of topics. We now have clear direction as a committee and some imperative deliverables to follow up on. The revelation of lack of security for the JFK Air Train that runs right under the international terminal was a huge eye opener, but that’s just one scary example. Further testimony indicated that a single roadway with access under the Port Authority Bus Terminal, previously guarded, is now unmanned and unsecured. Now is not the time to point fingers, but it is certainly time to fix the damn problem.”

Another striking moment occurred when Robert Morris, Vice President, Port Authority PBA, spoke of serious communication and inoperability problems faced by some New York Police Officers. “The officer carries a radio on his belt but he might as well be wearing a brick,” said Morris to describe the current situation, where some communication devices work so poorly at various locations that officers are using their personal cell phones to communicate with each other.

“We have front line, rank and file troops unable to communicate. Forget about interoperability, which was a dictate of the 9-11 Commission, we are talking about complete inoperability! This is nearly a decade after 9-11 and the same ‘bugs’ in our communications systems that cost lives still exist. Let us remember that these system errors cost many brave souls their lives on 9-11,” said Senator Ball. “We do not live in the middle of America; we live in New York, and the federal government has spent billions of dollars on Homeland Security in places at much lower security risk. If this issue is not resolved before the 10 year anniversary of 9-11, we should be ashamed. This is an aberration of power at the highest of levels.”

U.S. Congressman Peter King (R-New York) applauded Senator Ball’s efforts in opening up such a critical hearing to the public forum. “Senator Ball has performed a tremendous public

service in holding today's hearing. He is reminding New Yorkers of how real the al-Qaeda threat is, how much more work needs to be done and how we must remain extremely vigilant and never back down to political correctness," said King.

Another critical concern explored during the hearing was nuclear security, specifically as it pertains to Indian Point. According to testimony by Entergy officials, Indian Point was built to withstand various combinations of natural disasters, and improvements have been made since the 9/11 terrorist attacks to strengthen the nuclear plant's defenses.

"Nuclear power stations are the most hardened facilities in the United States," Dan Gagnon, Indian Point Coordinator of Security said. "It's essentially an industrial setting inside a military installation during wartime activity," Entergy officials told the Committee.

As an important follow up, the Senate Standing Committees on Homeland Security and Energy, will join forces on April 14th for an in depth tour of the facility. Senator Ball will join Senator Maziarz, the Chair of the Senate's Energy Committee for a tour of Indian Point on Thursday April 14th. A public hearing will follow called "Public Hearing: To examine contingency plans for the Indian Point Power Plant in case of a natural disaster, as well as to assess the overall impact of the facility on the reliability of the electrical grid and the local economy."

"Through these hearings, which are the first of a series, there is no doubt that we have made real progress. We have made improvements, as a State, a City and as a Nation, but we still have a soft underbelly that makes us vulnerable and in the current environment, no threat can be taken lightly. The passage of time seems to have lulled many of us into a sense of complacency, and the opiate of poor memory is no virtue when it comes to Homeland Security. The very fact that we have learned that command staffing is so slim that key targets like the George Washington Bridge, the Lincoln Tunnel and the Holland Tunnel lack basic protection, should shake to the core any New Yorker. This must be fixed immediately." Senator Ball said.

You can view the hearing in its entirety at Senator's Ball YouTube page. See www.tinyurl.com/HomelandSecurity4811

Next hearing to be held in Albany May 17th

Senators Ball, Maziarz (Senate Chair of Energy) will Conduct in Depth Indian Point Tour
April 14th