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## HOW CONGRESS CAN FUND EFFICIENT CRIME PROGRAMS AND STILL FIGHT TERRORISM

DAVID B. MUHLHAUSEN

The September 11, 2001, terrorist attacks on the World Trade Center and the Pentagon reshaped federal priorities, redirecting them toward efforts that will strengthen the government's ability to protect Americans from terrorism. The best way to fund anti-terrorism programs is for Washington to shift dollars away from duplicative, unproven, or demonstrably ineffective programs. Many of today's federal crime programs, such as the Community Oriented Policing Services (COPS) program, are good candidates because they deal with problems or functions that fall within the expertise, jurisdiction, and constitutional responsibility of state and local governments.

**Law Enforcement Funding in the Administration's Budget.** For fiscal year (FY) 2003, the Bush Administration has proposed three major changes in the federal government's funding for state and local law enforcement.

*First*, it would eliminate COPS grants for the hiring of additional police officers. This proposal has merit; even with its fine intentions, the program's performance has been unsatisfactory when measured by the rigorous standards of social science research.

COPS was created to reduce crime by putting 100,000 additional officers on America's streets. Research by The Heritage Foundation, the U.S. Department of Justice (DOJ), and the U.S. General Accounting Office has found that the program

failed even to come close to that goal despite \$8 billion in funding from FY 1994 to FY 2000. A 2000 DOJ *National Evaluation of the COPS Program* report projected that the number of officers COPS would place on the streets would peak at around 46,000 to 57,000 in 2001.

In 2001, the Heritage Foundation Center for Data Analysis conducted an independent analysis of the COPS program's effectiveness. After accounting for yearly state and local law enforcement expenditures and other socioeconomic factors, the analysis found that COPS grants both for the hiring of additional police officers and for redeployment (Making Officer Redeployment Effective, or MORE, grants) had no statistically significant effect on reducing the rates of violent crime.

*Second*, the Administration would consolidate duplicative grant programs into one \$800 million Justice Assistance Grants (JAG) program. According to the Office of Management and Budget (OMB), there is virtually no evidence that these Local Law Enforcement Block

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Grants (LLEBGs) and Byrne formula grants have been effective in reducing crime; moreover, they lack adequate measures of performance. The Administration's JAG program would place greater emphasis on measuring performance. Both changes—consolidating duplicative grants and measuring performance—represent sound public policy.

*Third*, the Administration is requesting \$3.5 billion for Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) grants to improve the preparedness of state and local first responders (such as police, firemen, and emergency personnel) in dealing with terrorism. The grants would fund programs to make local responses to terrorist acts of mass destruction more efficient and better coordinated. The funds would be used to improve communication, training, and technology.

Many members of the law enforcement community are concerned that FEMA normally responds once a destructive act has occurred. It is not well-suited to providing federal assistance to law enforcement efforts for protecting against terrorism. Funding for law enforcement needs to be proactive as well as reactive. Law enforcement will be called upon not only to respond to terrorist acts, but also to uncover and stop terrorist plots. And as National Sheriffs' Association President John Bittick recently testified before the U.S. House Judiciary Subcommittee on Crime, "We will never ask nor can we expect our Fire, EMS, or Health personnel to face gunfire, explosives, or other deadly assaults. That is the job of police and sheriffs, and it is ours alone."

**What Washington Should Do.** It is the responsibility of law enforcement to detect, prevent, and respond to terrorism. Congress should set aside a portion of the \$3.5 billion requested by the Administration for FEMA grants to help state and local law enforcement entities acquire the skills and tools

they need to perform this function well. It should transfer a portion of the Administration's FEMA funding request to the Department of Justice, with the grants to be administered by DOJ for multiple purposes. Grants could be used, for example, to help local law enforcement and the federal government develop a means to share intelligence on suspected terrorist activities; to train local law enforcement in ways to identify and stop terrorist activities; and to assist local law enforcement in the conduct of threat assessments and implementation of strategies to safeguard vulnerable targets.

To enhance the value of every dollar spent on behalf of the taxpayers, Congress and the Administration should continue to review and reduce funding for ineffective grant programs and consolidate duplicative programs into single grant programs. Congress also should, as always, end the funding of any unproductive program.

**Conclusion.** From a policy standpoint, the Administration's position on the COPS, LLEBG, and Byrne grants is sound, but its proposal to use FEMA to administer what amount to law enforcement grants is not. Given the nation's susceptibility to future terrorist attacks, the federal government should strive to help state and local law enforcement—the first responders to such attacks—improve their ability to detect and prevent terrorism as well as to respond to an attack. A far better policy would be for DOJ to administer the grants.

During Congress's budget deliberations, it should keep in mind the importance of reviewing and reorienting the government's spending priorities to match its greatest security responsibilities and avoid pouring billions of dollars into unproven or unsuccessful programs like COPS.

—David B. Muhlhausen is a Policy Analyst in the Center for Data Analysis at The Heritage Foundation.