

Testimony of
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The events of September 11, 2001 have brought much attention to the manner in which the terrorist attack on the Pentagon was respond to by local area public safety “first responders” and how interoperability voice (radio) communications was achieved.

The preparations that allowed for seamless and effective radio communications among the initial local area Fire-Rescue-Emergency Medical Service and Law Enforcement agency response on September 11th are founded in an event that had occurred twenty years prior and less then ¼ mile from the Pentagon. That event was the crash of Air Florida Flight 90 onto the 14th Street Bridge and into the Potomac River after taking off from Washington National Airport on January 13, 1982 during a severe snowstorm.

This crash highlighted the concern public safety agencies had been expressing for many years prior concerning the lack of “interoperable” radio systems and the lack of adequate radio spectrum/frequencies to effectively communicate on.

As a result of that event local area public safety communications personnel pledged themselves to, within their ability, correct or at least improve this situation.

During this testimony Mr. Souder, who in 1982 was assigned to the District of Columbia Fire Department Communications Center and subsequently became the Administrator of the Arlington County, Virginia 9-1-1 Public Safety Emergency Communications Center, where he served on September 11th, and recently was appointed Director of the Montgomery County, Maryland 9-1-1 Emergency Communications Center, will highlight how the Washington, DC metropolitan area was able to achieve radio communications interoperability, what problems were encountered at the Pentagon, what still must be done and how what has been done can serve as a model for communities and regions throughout the United Sates.