

*Remarks for the  
Grant Award to Regional Response Team / Tupelo  
November 24, 2002*

Good afternoon. I want to start by thanking Robert Latham and his team at MEMA for the great work they've been doing lately. It has been a busy fall – Tropical Storm Isidore, Hurricane Lili and the recent tornado in Columbus have kept everyone working hard.

MEMA does so much more than just responding to natural disasters. Since the attacks of September 11, they have a key role in homeland security. Robert Latham is doing a great job as the head of homeland security for Mississippi, and I appreciate his taking on this role.

The events of 9/11 gave us new challenges. We've found ourselves facing new and different threats. We've worked hard to meet those challenges.

Last year, we put an incident command system in place to ensure good communications in case of an attack. We've hosted a domestic terrorism summit with statewide emergency responders, and MEMA continues to conduct bioterrorism exercises around the state with county and local officials.

The ability to respond quickly to situations is vitally important, and today we are here to strengthen that ability. Prior to the events of September 11 – and this will tell you just how important good planning is – we applied for funding to support Mississippi’s Domestic Preparedness Strategic Plan.

Today we’re here to present the Homeland Security Regional Response Team in Tupelo and Lee County with a grant for \$98,127. These funds will be used to purchase first responder team equipment.

The members of this Regional Response Team are the front line of defense for this area, and I appreciate their commitment and willingness to serve.

I have four priorities for this state – education, jobs, health care and public safety. Today’s grant will go a long way to ensuring the safety and security of the people of Mississippi. Thank you.