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Testimony before the Portland City Council
Thursday, February 5, 2015 5:00 p.m. City Council Chambers
Bill Barr, Chair of the Citizens Crime Commission

Good evening Mayor Hales, and Commissioners. I am Bill Barr, Chair of the Citizens Crime Commission. Thank you for this opportunity to share our view about the City's role and responsibility in combatting terrorism. I am testifying today on behalf of the Citizens Crime Commission members and the Portland Business Alliance. We support the City having two Portland police officers assigned to the local Joint Terrorism Task Force as prescribed in Resolutions 147 and 148 and urge you to vote yes. We do not support Resolution 146 preventing the city from entering into an Memorandum of Understanding with the FBI and preventing Portland Police Bureau officers from being part of the JTTF, and urge you to vote no.

All of us have a vested interest in combatting terrorism. Acts of terrorism threaten our security and our liberty. Several events in recent years, including the attempted bombing of the Christmas tree lighting ceremony in Pioneer Courthouse Square, demonstrate that Oregon and Portland are not immune. We need only mention Boston and Paris to instantly recall the terror experienced recently in those cities. Members of the Citizens Crime Commission and the Portland Business Alliance are concerned. Both boards have examined this issue and taken a position supporting the City's full participation in the Joint Terrorism Task Force. Companies including Greenbrier, Northwest Natural, FLIR, and the Portland Trail Blazers, to name a few, have a vested interest in safety and security for their product distribution, their employees and the public they rely on. Acts of terrorism threaten that safety and threaten the foundation of a prosperous business climate. That is why they support collaborative law enforcement teams who share information on potential threats to community safety and leverage resources to respond to those threats.

We have taken time to speak with leaders in several cities in our region and around the country about their experience in working with the Joint Terrorism Task Force. Uniformly they have spoken to the value created, the time saved and the increased security experienced in working together.

Joint Terrorism Task Forces are part of our national security. Local, state, and federal law enforcement officers and agencies share information, leverage their relationships and coordinate efforts on the focused goal of detecting, deterring and vigorously responding to

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terrorist threats. The FBI and Portland Police have separate unique strengths and advantages when it comes to counterterrorism. The FBI has greater resources and access to secret or classified information necessary to investigate national and international terrorist networks. The importance of local police to this collaboration cannot be overstated. More than 900 Portland police officers with close to 400,000 contacts with community members every year, know the community and the community values they are entrusted to protect and serve. Local officers bring that network of expertise and knowledge often not possessed by federal JTTF partners. That knowledge of the local community and a greater awareness of local sensitivities and values are critical to enlist the community's help in combatting terrorism.

Community security and protection of civil liberties are not mutually exclusive. We are confident law enforcement working together with the community is the best way to accomplish these objectives. We are safer when Portland police officers have more information about threats in our community. Having Portland Police Bureau officers on the task force makes it stronger and ensures Portland values are represented and protected.

We are the only city of our size not part of this national security effort. We should join other cities in our state and across the nation, united against terrorism with the goal of doing everything possible to increase safety of our community.

Thank you for inviting this testimony from the Citizen Crime Commission.