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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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**Homeland Security Hypocrisy: Bay Area UASI Threatens To Pull Disaster Preparedness Funding From Alameda County**

**Oakland-**An attempted consensus-building meeting between Alameda County's Ad-Hoc Committee on UASI and the Alameda County Sheriff's Office ended in an impasse over four of the sixty recommendations accepted by the County's Supervisors to transform the regional training exercise Urban Shield.

The Ad-Hoc Committee was informed that the Board of Supervisors will be asked to accept a UASI Memorandum of Understanding without several approved recommendations at their March 12th board meeting. The Committee was also notified Bay Area UASI, the Homeland Security entity that doles out federal disaster preparedness funds, would not further consider any Alameda County requests and would consider re-allocation of the regional grant at its March 14th meeting.

The Alameda County Ad-Hoc Committee on UASI is the second working group convened by Alameda's supervisors in a multi-year process to address community concerns about the weapons expo and SWAT exercise. Protests have dogged the event since 2013, with more than [a dozen arrests](#) outside the Dublin site in 2016. A series of scandals have enveloped the event in recent years, including the sale of t-shirts at the expo with [rude and threatening messages](#), the use of a vendor who sells [racist "humanoid target" dummies](#), the [presence of the Oath Keepers](#) at the event's community fair, the training of [ICE officers](#), the use of [keffiyehs](#) during SWAT drills, [fusion center surveillance](#) of individuals peacefully protesting the event, and the use of dozens of faux [improvised explosive devices](#) in the shorebird marine sanctuary at Alameda Point.

The general thrust of the Ad-Hoc Committee's recommendations has been to tone down the event's militarism and give greater emphasis to prevention, mitigation and recovery/resilience using FEMA's whole community approach. The four specific recommendations that deadlocked at Wednesday's meeting were as follows:

- Build the capacity of vulnerable populations to have an authentic and meaningful voice in the planning, implementation, and evaluation of UASI-funded exercises.
- Eliminate the vendor show from the UASI-funded exercise.
- Re-design law enforcement portions of the exercise, so that they are not SWAT deployment scenarios
- Change the name of Urban Shield, rebrand UASI-funded exercises and create outreach material that take into account all UASI program audiences, including those with functional and access needs.

Oakland Privacy's Tracy Rosenberg, who attended the last two Urban Shield events in 2017 and 2018 as a community observer, commented; "It is disappointing to see such a belligerent attitude taking shape towards common sense changes to better meet the needs of Alameda County and the region. Northern California has significant challenges from natural disasters like earthquakes and forest fires, and not all violent actors wear keffiyehs. Emergency preparedness funding needs to be used for all of our real public health and safety needs, not just a select few that match a particular federal narrative about what terrorism is".

Objections to the Ad-Hoc Committee's recommendations, as endorsed by the Board of Supervisors, have been couched as not being in compliance with Bay Area UASI's grant guidelines. But published guidelines for regional exercises from both Bay Area UASI and FEMA/DHS do not mandate the use of the name "Urban Shield", having a vendor expo for weapons, or SWAT deployments. Building the capacity of vulnerable communities to respond to and recover from disasters is a stated FEMA goal. The 2018 Urban Shield exercise was already out of compliance with DHS/FEMA guidelines. FEMA requires regional exercises that involve the disturbance of natural lands to undergo an Environmental and Historic Preservation (EHP) review and to complete that process prior to the release of funds, not to mention prior to the actual event.

In 2018, the EHP clearance for the Urban Shield event was not provided until October 24, 2018, or seven weeks after the event was completed. A public records request from Oakland Privacy showed [a rebuke to Bay Area UASI](#) from the Homeland Security Grants Department; "For future Urban Shield EHP memos, we recommend that Bay Area UASI submit requests 60 days before the scheduled exercise".

The tardy memo also does not reference the controversial Alameda Point "dignitary protection" exercise, which was held at what the Golden Gate Audobon Society describes as "one of the most important [bird areas](#) in the State of California, housing over 138 species including terns, larks, shrikes, avocets, stilts, herons, pelicans, egrets, hawks, falcons, and owls.

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