

# Feds raise city's terrorist risk, boost funds to \$5.5M

By Jacob Green

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The Department of Homeland Security gave Phoenix a \$5.5 million grant after the federal agency bumped up the city's terrorist-risk assessment from 18 to 15.

Homeland Security ranks 25 high-risk urban areas every fiscal year based on several factors, including population, border crossings, key infrastructure and assessments made by the FBI.

The rankings correlate with the amount of federal dollars allocated through the Urban Area Security Initiative, which helps cities in preventing, responding to and recovering from potential terrorist attacks and other emergencies.

"While we would like to say we don't have high risk, it's more important to be realistic," Phoenix Councilman Daniel Valenzuela said. "It's important that our ranking accurately reflects the security risk in our area."

Valenzuela, along with Mayor Greg Stanton, Emergency Management coordinator Scott Krushak and other city officials, traveled to Washington, D.C., this year to meet with Homeland Security Secretary Janet Napolitano to push for the increase in Phoenix's ranking.

"We felt that we were not ranked where we needed to be ranked," Valenzuela said. "Some people may say it's bad because there's some potential risk, but at least now we are getting the necessary funding."

Phoenix received \$1.5 million more this year than in 2012.

Valenzuela said the potential dangers that validate a jump in the rankings include the city's proximity to Mexico's border, the size of its population and the Palo Verde Nuclear Generating Station, the largest nuclear-powered electrical-



Greg Stanton



Daniel Valenzuela

generating facility in the country, which he said is a particularly sensitive target.

"If something were to happen there, it would be felt throughout Arizona," he said.

Stanton said he has been lobbying Washington for several years to increase the ranking for Phoenix.

"We had not been receiving our appropriate share of the grant money based on where we were ranked," he said.

Phoenix has not become exposed to any new risks, Stanton said.

"Nothing has changed to make us a riskier place. We just wanted better acknowledgment of where we should have been ranked all along," he said.

Krushak said Congress has been "shrinking" federal grant money provided through Homeland Security, and so an increase in Phoenix's ranking was necessary to secure limited funds.

A City Council report by Krushak, Fire Chief Bob Khan and Police Chief Daniel V. Garcia said the city will spread the money across departments to purchase equipment, set up terrorism and other emergency-response programs and "to implement target-hardening measures to protect critical infrastructure."