Statement of

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I. Introduction

Chairwoman Harman, Ranking Member Reichert, and members of the Subcommittee, thank you for the opportunity to appear before you today and discuss the performance of the Homeland Security Information Network in the state of Tennessee.

The State's ability to share information quickly and accurately over a secure network, among various communities of interests, is crucial in order to prevent, protect, deter and respond to potential criminal and terrorist acts. The state of Tennessee has followed the Department of Homeland Security's lead and invested its information sharing holdings and strategies on the Homeland Security Information Network (HSIN) platform. The Homeland Security Information Network – Tennessee (HSIN-TN) provides connectivity for public service disciplines to receive and share information throughout Tennessee. Through a successful partnership with the Department of Homeland Security, HSIN – TN is the secure information sharing network for the state and provides users the ability to interface with the state all crimes intelligence and information fusion center.

II. HSIN – TN Portal Development

In February 2005, TN was selected to participate in the pilot phase of HSIN development at the state level. Recognizing the state did not have the ability to gather, review and disseminate information via a common system, the TN Office of Homeland Security (OHS) developed information sharing goals for the state and an aggressive timeline for the deployment of the HSIN – TN across Tennessee. Working directly with the IT contractor, Mantech-IST, the initial TN portals where developed. A HSIN-TN pre-pilot was conducted in August 2005 and a pilot phase was conducted in September to allow TN OHS users to become familiar with the system. Consequently, HSIN became a viable tool for communication with Louisiana during Hurricane Katrina. Communicating via the HSIN portals, Tennessee was able to provide the Louisiana State Police with logistical support and the Tennessee Office of Homeland Security was able to route an assistance call received from a relative in Knoxville to the Louisiana State Police which resulted in the successful rescue of a family trapped in a flooded attic.

The initial HSIN – TN training of law enforcement occurred in November, 2005. A fusion center initiative conference was held in December 2005. During this conference, HSIN – TN was briefed to the state and local law enforcement leadership as the information sharing platform for the TN fusion center.

III. HSIN – TN Training

In January 2006, I was named the HSIN-TN program manager and tasked with developing a HSIN training program for the state. Based on Tennessee geography and the established 11 TN Homeland Security Districts; a regional, east to west fielding plan was derived. Training requirements were submitted to the primary HSIN training contractor, MTCI, and training began in east TN at Johnson City in March 2006 and

concluded in Memphis in August 2006. This initial fielding plan resulted in the training of over 783 individual users, representing over 330 agencies.

The initial training strategy was to train local, state and federal law enforcement officers in order to develop a user base that would share critical information with each other and provide the fusion center with all source criminal data. While reviewing the initial east TN training, a training gap was identified. We determined the state was missing an opportunity to get various public service disciplines together for training which would further promote interaction and information sharing between law enforcement and non-law enforcement partners. Training throughout the remaining homeland security districts was then offered to additional communities of interest (COI) such as emergency management, fire and rescue and selected critical infrastructure partners.

IV. HSIN – TN Portals

In June 2006, DHS recognized the HSIN – TN portals as operational and the portals where considered live and no longer a training environment. TN currently manages five HSIN state portals; Home, Law Enforcement, Critical Infrastructure, Training and OHS. All portals are now monitored by the TN Fusion Center, a joint partnership between the TN OHS and the Tennessee Bureau of Investigations (TBI). The portals allow all communities of interest users to share information at the Sensitive But Unclassified (SBU) level based on their occupational discipline and provides secure instant messaging via the JABBER collaboration tool. HSIN – TN users can contribute products to the appropriate portal, request information or operational support from the fusion center, research or contribute to the document library and access additional DHS portals via hotlinks. Since becoming operational, we have increased our user base to more than 1000 trained users representing over 500 agencies. HSIN training continues on a weekly basis as the state strives to make HSIN – TN the focal point for information sharing in Tennessee.

V. Current Challenges

While HSIN – TN provides the state with an excellent ability and resource, frustration is still experienced on managing and maintaining the system at the state level. As the HSIN – TN program manager, I have administration and community of interests rights but these are limited to only the ability to nominate and validate new users and to remove information from the portals. I cannot effectively manage the user data base. There is no capability to monitor use of the portal, review the user data base or to delete users when they no longer require access to the portals. Once the user is validated into the system, I loose the ability monitor and maintain the state user accounts. However, I have been briefed that a new account management tool is reportedly near fielding.

The line of communication between the state and a viable DHS HSIN representative is convoluted. Tennessee has a Stakeholder Relationship Manager assigned through Sim-G Technologies but when request for support or changes to the portals are requested they

often go unresolved or unanswered. When HSIN was first deployed at the State level it included a GIS mapping product. Shortly after our state portals where considered functional and after a third of the state had been trained, a decision was made to upgrade the HSIN system. The concept was to standardized portal configuration in order to facilitate faster deployment to new state partners. While this was understandable, the changes to the portal where made without input from the pilot states and included changes that were not discussed with the pilot states. One of those critical changes was the decision to drop the GIS mapping product. A reliable mapping tool is crucial to the success of the portal and provides the smaller departments and agencies a capability they normally could not afford. I have been briefed that a replacement mapping tool will be available on the state portals in the future.

When the pilot states were identified, an HSIN state working group was developed to allow pilot states to meet together quarterly and discuss operational and technical issues with each other and the DHS HSIN staff and contract support. These meetings were very beneficial and allowed the states to adopt best practices and identify common issues and problems with the system. After only two meetings, the working group was dissolved without explanation and changes to the portals where implemented without input from the states. Information technology (IT) support is now handled through the Change Request Registration and Tracking System (CHaRTS). This automated system for requesting changes to the portals works but it is hard to explain complex technical issues through written communication. As the portals are operational, the State cannot afford to submit changes through and automated system, problems need to be rapidly worked in real time. In the past, by talking directly to the IT contract support, simple changes could be made over the phone and reviewed by the state in a matter of minutes, not days or weeks.

VI. Recommendations

The problems and frustrations currently experienced with HSIN are all directly related to a lack of communication and clear guidance between DHS and state partners. Re-establishing the state and local working groups will greatly enhance the states ability to communicate common issues and develop working solutions for implementation. Working together as a team to develop policy and procedures, lessons learned and best practices, and to review, test and implement new technical advances and solutions is critical to the continued success between DHS and its state partners.

VII. Conclusion

The Homeland Security Information Network is a critical component of the information sharing system of Tennessee. Tennessee has taken this information sharing tool and forged it into the secure information sharing network for the state. Continued cooperation and interaction between DHS and its state partners are crucial to the continued success of this system. Re-establishing the state working groups, implementing account management tools and streamlining the IT support will help to ensure the stability and viability of HSIN for years to come.