



One Hundred Tenth Congress
U.S. House of Representatives
Committee on Homeland Security
Washington, DC 20515

January 17, 2008

The Honorable Paul A. Schneider
Acting Deputy Secretary
Department of Homeland Security
Washington, D.C. 20528

Dear Mr. Schneider:

For the past several years, the Committee on Homeland Security has been closely monitoring the development of the Homeland Security Information Network (HSIN), the Department of Homeland Security's primary means for communicating sensitive but unclassified information (SBU) to its partners in the law enforcement, emergency responder, and private sector communities. On October 26, 2007, Committee staff met with Mr. Wayne Parent, the Deputy Director of the Office of Operations Coordination, and Ms. Theresa Phillips, the HSIN Program Manager, to discuss the current status of the HSIN and ongoing efforts to make it interoperable with other information sharing systems already in use by State, local, and tribal law enforcement and other entities. Both Mr. Parent and Ms. Phillips reported significant progress since our May 10, 2007 intelligence subcommittee hearing titled, "Fixing the Homeland Security Information Network: Finding the Way Forward For Better Information Sharing". Their update to staff was very welcome news about a program with ongoing challenges.

We recently learned, however, that on October 27, 2007 – one day after the staff briefing with Mr. Parent and Ms. Phillips – you issued a Memorandum that announced that the HSIN would be replaced. Specifically, your Memorandum describes a new "DHS Portal Consolidation Program" that will result in an "innovative, federally compliant [portal] environment that will replace the current HSIN platform and facilitate secure access to DHS information and services for all user communities . . ." Toward that end, your Memorandum (1) directed all Department components to stop any new development and enhancements to existing portal environments on the HSIN; (2) required the HSIN Program Management Office to deliver a requirements document for the collaboration and SBU portal within thirty days and [to] provide an acquisition plan within sixty days; and (3) mandated that all DHS components submit their operational data, service and technical portal architectures, including requirements, to the Chief Information Officer. You concluded your Memorandum by stating that, "DHS will realize substantial monetary savings and enhanced mission performance, with measurable results being achieved early in the transition. DHS will increase its information sharing

capabilities, and improve user satisfaction by providing the stakeholders, DHS employees and citizens with a collaborative, innovative and scaleable web communications tool.”

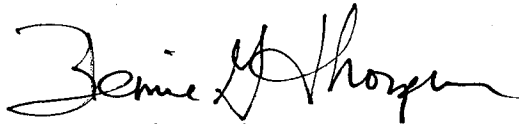
While we agree that taking the troubled HSIN program in a new direction may make sense, we are surprised that your plan was not briefed to Committee staff on October 26 or brought to our attention subsequently. It is unacceptable that the Department would brief the Congress on the status of the program on one day and dramatically alter that program the next. We accordingly require responses to the following questions:

- During the implementation of the DHS Portal Consolidation Program, what will happen to the existing HSIN? Will it continue to be used by all stakeholders during the changeover to the new enterprise SBU portal? If so, how and with what limitations? Most importantly, will any of the HSIN development effort to date be reused with the new enterprise SBU portal, or has the entire HSIN effort until this point been wasted?
- How much money has been spent on the HSIN to date – including the development of the portions of it that will now be replaced under the new DHS Portal Consolidation Plan – and who have the private sector contractors been for each stage of the HSIN? What specific work has each contractor been responsible for, and whose work is now being overridden by the new DHS Portal Consolidation Plan? Who will be tapped in the contractor community to implement the HSIN’s new direction and at what estimated cost?
- HSIN’s program management has historically been very weak. What changes are being made to improve the program management of the new enterprise SBU portal? What process will be used to validate the new enterprise SBU portal with appropriate user communities, and what steps have been taken in that regard?
- What is planned for States that use HSIN as their primary information sharing system? Were States consulted about the changes you are now making, and if so, how is their input being incorporated?
- Congress and many in the State and local law enforcement communities have been pushing for better HSIN integration with current systems such as Law Enforcement Online (LEO), the Law Enforcement Information Exchange (LINX), and the Regional Information Sharing System (RISS). To what extent will the new HSIN integrate with these systems?
- On what do you base your statement that “DHS will realize substantial monetary savings” with the new enterprise SBU portal? What analysis have you done that has resulted in your conclusion and who conducted that analysis for the Department? Moreover, how will the cost savings that you describe be realized and how much money will be saved as a result of the changeover to the new enterprise SBU portal?

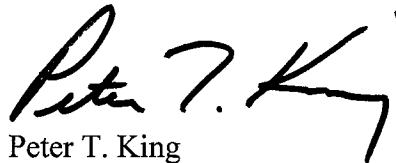
- You note that the current HSIN site looks “governmental” as if that is a bad thing. What does the “governmental” appearance of the HSIN network have to do with its usefulness? Is the HSIN being revamped merely to make it look less “governmental”?
- To what extent have you consulted the Program Manager of the Information Sharing Environment in the Office of the Director of National Intelligence when determining that such a dramatic overhaul of the HSIN was necessary?

Please provide written responses to these questions by February 14, 2008, along with any written version of the DHS Portal Consolidation Program, material provided to you by the HSIN Program Management Office in response to your Memorandum, and the contracts for the HSIN that DHS has been party to since the HSIN’s inception. If you have any questions, please contact Cherri Branson or Tom Finan with the Committee’s Majority staff at 202-226-2616 or Joe Vealencis with the Committee’s Republican staff at 202-226-8417. We look forward to hearing from you.

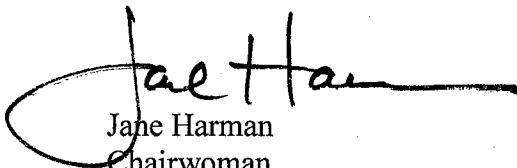
Sincerely, _____



Bennie G. Thompson
Chairman
Committee on Homeland Security



Peter T. King
Ranking Member
Committee on Homeland Security



Jane Harman
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