

**Homeland Security Information Network: Moving past
the Missteps Toward Better Information Sharing**

**TESTIMONY OF
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HOMELAND SECURITY INFORMATION NETWORK: MOVING PAST THE MISSTEPS TOWARD BETTER INFORMATION SHARING

Good morning Mr. Chairman and distinguished members of the Subcommittee.

My name is Lee Miller and I am a 15-year member of the Virginia State Police. I currently coordinate the day-to-day operations of the Virginia Fusion Center. Thank you for the opportunity to testify today regarding the Homeland Security Information Network. There have been several reports written regarding the numerous federal networks that are available to promote information sharing among local, state, and federal agencies and private industry. These reports discussed practices that were not utilized in the implementation of the Homeland Security Information Network and recommendations to improve coordination between the Department of Homeland Security and local and state initiatives. In my testimony, I will discuss some of these issues, but I will concentrate on collaborative efforts that will enhance information sharing as well as Department of Homeland Security initiatives that have produced positive results in order to move towards a better information sharing platform.

The Primary Mission of the Virginia Fusion Center is to fuse together key resources from local, state, and federal agencies and private industries to facilitate information collection, analysis, and sharing in order to prevent and deter terrorist attacks and all other forms of criminal activity. The secondary mission of the Virginia Fusion Center is to support the Virginia Emergency Operations Center by centralizing information and resources to provide a coordinated and effective response in the event of an attack or natural disaster. After September 11, 2001 terrorist attacks, law enforcement agencies were forced to meet the informational demands created by the increased focus on terrorism. As a result, the resources needed to provide proactive intelligence operations have increased exponentially, thus compelling law enforcement agencies to consider the concept of a Fusion Center.

In order to meet our mission, the Virginia Fusion Center utilizes a vast array of networks and databases to assist in the fusion process. These separate systems provide information and intelligence relevant to situational awareness as well as providing the ability to identify trends, patterns and targets that enhances the ability of law enforcement to be pro-active instead of re-active. Some of the networks that the Virginia Fusion Center monitors during our day-to-day operations are the Homeland Security Information Network (HSIN), Department of Justice's Law Enforcement Online (LEO), Federal Protective Services Law Enforcement portal, Homeland Secure Data Network (HSDN), Regional Information Sharing System Network (RISSNET), Joint Regional Information Exchange System (JRIES) as well as systems developed by the Commonwealth of Virginia. As stated in previous reports, the number of systems that are available causes duplication and does not promote an effective business process. These systems also provide the Virginia Fusion Center an avenue for

disseminating information and intelligence to our different partners. In order to reach all of our partners, our information must be submitted to multiple networks and systems thus creating another area of duplication and operational ineffectiveness.

Moving Forward

On March 24, 2006, the Department of Homeland Security's Office of Intelligence and Analysis (I&A) initiated the Homeland Security Information Network State and Local Intelligence (HSIN-Intel) Community of Interest (COI). This was a three month pilot effort for the multi-directional sharing assessments between state and local intelligence professionals and Department of Homeland Security's Office of Intelligence and Analysis (DHS/I&A) of timely, accurate, actionable information at the unclassified, For Official Use Only level. This pilot gave local and state officials the opportunity to provide input into the business process and functionality of the system, and a Steering Group comprised of local and state officials wrote and approved the charter. This pilot was extended for a second three months, and then the Steering Group recommended turning this into an operational Community of Interest. This collaborative effort created a true Community of Interest that encompassed a useable network of intelligence professionals, analyst to analyst collaboration and a continuing partnership between local, state and federal intelligence communities. This community has created trusted relationships that ultimately is a more powerful tool than any network or portal and these relationships will remove the resistance to sharing information that has plagued government response in the past, thereby pooling together information from all pertinent intelligence sources to effect a decisive response. This Community of Interest now has fourteen member states, and it is expected to double by the end of this fiscal year, and is a perfect example of local, state and federal agencies working together in an effort to meet the needs of all those involved.

Recommendations

In order to be a true Intelligence led policing model, local, state and federal analysts must be able to see all information and intelligence. If analysts are provided only a couple pieces of the puzzle, we will never be able to see the overall picture. Local, state, tribal and federal agencies as well as private industry have individual pieces, and we must have an IT mechanism as well as trusted relationships to put these pieces together. Currently, state and local analysts are provided access to a wide range of unclassified systems, to include the Homeland Security Information Network, but have limited access to classified systems such as the Homeland Secure Data Network (HSDN). Local, state and federal unclassified initiatives must be incorporated to meet the needs of everyone involved in homeland security and to improve operational effectiveness. Local and state intelligence professionals must also be given the same opportunity as their federal counterparts regarding the access to classified

systems. In the past, analysts from the federal intelligence community primarily focused on information contained in classified systems, while local and state analysts focused on information contained in unclassified systems. Using this system, how will we ever be able to see the overall picture?

Conclusion

Virginia and other state and local agencies understand the importance of protecting classified information to include sources and methods that are contained in these reports. The problem that still exists is the over classification of information and intelligence and the lack of tear lines that could be provided to local and state law enforcement in addition to other agencies and private Industry with a homeland security role. These tear lines could provide valuable tactical and strategic information that could assist in the overall mission of these entities. The ability of local and state law enforcement agencies to mitigate potential threats in their communities is hampered because of the lack of actionable information and intelligence. In all likelihood, a police officer in one of our communities will encounter a potential terrorist during their normal tour of duty, and without the information needed to perform their duties; they will not be able to identify the possible threat. The Federal Intelligence community needs to understand the importance of either providing local and state law enforcement agencies with a valid "right and need" access to some of these networks or the ability to provide tear lines through a standard business process and network. The Homeland Security Information Network would be a perfect network to disseminate these tear lines in "real time" so that local and state law enforcement agencies could have the ability to receive tactical and strategic information and intelligence to assist them in their homeland security role.