STATEMENT OF
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COORDINATION
U.S. DEPARTMENT OF HOMELAND SECURITY
BEFORE THE
SUBCOMMITTEE ON INTELLIGENCE, INFORMATION SHARING AND
TERRORISM RISK ASSESSMENT
COMMITTEE ON HOMELAND SECURITY
UNITED STATES HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

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Good morning, Madam Chairman, Ranking Member Reichert, and Members of the
Subcommittee. I am Wayne Parent, Deputy Director of the Office of Operations
Coordination at the U.S. Department of Homeland Security (DHS). I am pleased to
appear today before this Subcommittee. Thank you for inviting me today to discuss the
Homeland Security Information Network (HSIN) and to provide an update on the
Department's continuing efforts to improve information sharing and HSIN.

The DHS mission demands a robust information sharing environment. Key to addressing
information sharing requirements is the ability to share information both vertically and
horizontally. Assorted efforts are underway to connect the Department with our
stakeholders: state, local, and tribal entities, the private sector and other federal partners.
One of the most important tools DHS has to maximize information sharing is HSIN.

Background

As you are aware, HSIN is a set of commercially secure web-based portals through which
DHS provides real-time operation information and decision support, shares documents,
supplies situational awareness and collaboration opportunities, and provides alerts,
warnings and notifications. HSIN operates at the Sensitive-But-Unclassified (SBU)
level.

Although complex issues have, at times, hampered the effectiveness and use of HSIN, it
remains an important tool in the fulfillment of the Department's mission. Previously
released GAO and DHS Inspector General Reports have called attention to certain
shortcomings, and action has been taken by the Office of Operations Coordination to
address their various recommendations. Specifically, in response to these shortcomings,
Operations has, among other efforts:

- Improved Management

    In November 2006, our office hired the first Program Manager (PM) for HSIN
    and stood up a Joint Program Management Office (JPMO). Since starting, the
    PM has created integrated project teams to establish programmatic discipline and

to systematically address the network's development and use. The PM has initiated formal assessments of the system's vulnerabilities, redundancy, survivability and training. Additionally, the PM has identified key performance measures to gain a better understanding of the network's operation and use and guide future improvements. Of note, the PM initiated and completed an extensive review of HSIN, which I will discuss in more detail today. The review resulted in the creation of a HSIN Strategic Framework Implementation Plan.

- Assessed the Policy and Strategy Framework for HSIN

    In October of 2006, the Office of Operations Coordination stood up the HSIN Working Group which conducted an internal review of HSIN and issued a final report that provided recommendations to DHS leadership on the required actions or decisions to make HSIN a more effective and efficient program. The working group was comprised of representatives from various DHS components. Key recommendations were:

    1) Establish clearly defined requirements processes;
    2) Develop HSIN into a capable information sharing, communication, and collaboration solution;
    3) Identify the user and technical requirements of HSIN; and
    4) Develop metrics to periodically assess the program

    These recommendations formed the basis of the HSIN Strategic Framework Implementation Plan that was finalized in December 2006.

- Created the framework for the HSIN Mission Coordinating Committee (HMCC)

    The HMCC consists of DHS mission component representatives who plan to or are currently utilizing HSIN to support their operation mission requirements. The goal of the HMCC is to identify and validate operational enhancements to HSIN that are critical to the successful accomplishment of the mission of DHS components and the external partners they represent. Through these efforts, we can plan for a prioritized delivery of solutions that meet mission-operational needs.

- Create the HSIN Advisory Committee (HSINAC)

    A Federal Advisory Committee Act (FACA) compliant advisory committee is being formed to provide independent advice and recommendations to DHS leadership, particularly the Office of Operations Coordination Director, on HSIN requirements of end users within State, local, Federal and Tribal governments and the private sector.

    The advisory committee efforts will initially focus on: operational requirements necessary for effective information sharing and incident management;

compatibility and interoperability between HSIN and other relevant information networks, databases, and resources of State, local, Federal, Tribal, and private sector entities; and the security, integrity, and safety of HSIN resources and contents.

The Federal Register notice announcing the formation of the HSINAC was posted on October 20, 2006. The Federal Register notice soliciting members for the committee was published earlier this week. Our goal is to have our first meeting of the advisory committee this summer.

Interagency Integration

The Office of Operations Coordination is committed to integrating HSIN with other interagency information sharing systems. The intent is for HSIN to leverage existing platforms designed to share information so as to increase information sharing efficiency among partnership organizations and their existing systems. As such, we are working to establish a technical means to seamlessly utilize information resident on other platforms. This enables HSIN to both serve the internal needs of DHS missions, while also addressing the convergence of DHS missions with those of other agencies.

Some of our current initiatives focused on interagency integration include:

Reestablish Connection between HSIN and RISS

The initiative to reconnect the technological bridge between the HSIN and the Regional Information Sharing System (RISS) is nearing completion. In June 2006, when HSIN completed a technology refresher that moved HSIN from the old JRIES technology platform to its current platform, the bridge was inadvertently severed and not reconnected. Reconnecting this bridge will allow pre-defined information to automatically flow back and forth between the two systems.

Additionally, the original agreement between HSIN and RISS only allowed for very narrowly defined information to be passed between the systems. This definition mandated that the content be specifically identified as terrorism information. We are working to incorporate a more liberal, flexible definition such as suspicious activity that may later be deemed terrorist related. The expansion of content will enhance information delivery over a single platform; maximizing the usefulness of both systems.

Intelink-U

HSIN will provide a link to Intelink-Unclassified, affording access to the content and contacts available on this online compendium of resources. Intelink-U is well known throughout the Information Sharing Environment (ISE) and is a well-used content repository. This enhancement will provide a broad range of relevant

information to HSIN users who may not have another way to access this valuable resource.

Federated Identity Management

The JPMO is actively involved in an Office of the Program Manager-Information Sharing Environment (PM-ISE)-sponsored, Department of Justice-led pilot project for Federated identity management. Federated identity management is a systematic effort to create a single sign-on for multiple secure websites. Our office understands the long-term possibilities and benefits of this pilot and is committed to the effort.

Federated identity management will allow authorized HSIN users to seamlessly traverse other participating programs' systems, gaining access to content and tools that are not available on HSIN. It will also permit other authorized system members to gain access to the tools and content on HSIN. This is a significant step in the direction of eliminating duplication and maximizing existing systems across the entire landscape of the ISE. HSIN, Law Enforcement Online (LEO), and RISS are all participants in this groundbreaking pilot. Once identity management has been federated – including to the state fusion centers and critical infrastructure Sector Coordinating Councils – it will provide a basis for such advanced capabilities as fine-grained dissemination control based on the recipient's identity, role, and organizations/communities to which the recipient belongs.

Data Exchange Hub

The Office of Operations Coordination is working towards an initial operating capability between HSIN and a Data Exchange Hub (DEH) that connects the National Capital Region's (NCR) emergency management systems. The DEH will enable a two-way transfer of information between multiple reporting systems within the NCR (to include WebEOC) with HSIN. The success of this initiative is expected to result in a repeatable process that can be used throughout the nation to connect HSIN to emergency operation centers that use different communication platforms.

HSIN Utilization
Over the past nine months, numerous improvements and enhancements to HSIN have been made and I believe it has the potential become the information sharing and situational awareness tool it was envisioned to be. For instance, DHS National Operations Center (NOC) notifications, which alert leadership and key stakeholders when incidents occur, are posted on HSIN through the COP. Additionally, HSIN supports the National Incident Management System (NIMS) by becoming the primary national hub for communications and information during major domestic incidents.

An increased number of DHS components are now using HSIN extensively in the execution of their mission. The Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) has integrated the tool in all emergency management coordination and has conducted extensive training across the nation. The United States Coast Guard has begun to use the tool as its primary coordination tool for exercises and missions that require large-scale, real-time collaboration. In addition, Customs and Border Protection (CBP) has constructed collaboration space for each of its 27 border patrol sectors to enhance seamless information flow and situational awareness. Data currently shows that CBP is making daily use of this tool.

HSIN is also an important tool for information sharing between state, local, tribal, and private sector communities. The network is also actively embraced by state and local fusion centers across the country, many of which have created their own customized portals. For example, in the State of Tennessee, the Director of the Office of Homeland Security has cited HSIN as the backbone of its new state fusion center and recommended that all states adopt the network for information sharing and situational awareness. As I believe you will hear from additional testimony today, The State of Florida is also an active user of the system.

One of the most valuable tools on HSIN is the Common Operating Picture. HSIN and the COP will be increasingly relied upon as the Department continues with a number of important initiatives, in particular, interagency planning and exercises. The COP is a real-time, web-based situational awareness tool that ties together key homeland security partners primarily at the Federal, State, and Joint Federal Official (JFO) levels. It is designed to:

- Provide a common view of critical information during a crisis in order to enhance situational awareness;
- Support sound, timely, risk mitigated and informed decision making by providing a shared understanding of the situation;
- Provide the inter-agency with the capability to share critical information;
- Provide information integrity for reporting requirements; and
- Support a geospatial mapping feature known as iCAV—the infrastructure critical asset viewer --- that can overlay events such as hurricanes onto critical infrastructure assets.

The COP was initially deployed during the Hurricane Season of 2006. As such, the focus of the early iterations of the COP was on natural disaster information. Currently, as part of our incremental approach, we are advancing the COP capabilities from natural disasters to all hazards and all threats. These steps will advance the COP capabilities from unclassified, hurricanes/natural disasters to classified, terrorist threats and incidents. The current focus is to develop a COP template for the "worse case" scenario for nuclear/radiological incidents and will use national exercises and real world events to validate and continue this development.

While initially focused on integrating natural disaster information, DHS activated the COP for several non-natural disaster incidents, including the liquid explosive airline plot in the UK and the private airplane crash in New York City.

Additionally, the National Infrastructure Coordination Center (NICC) utilizes the HSIN-Critical Sectors (HSIN-CS) portal to share information about the nation's infrastructure with private sector stakeholders. DHS has designated HSIN-CS to be its primary information-sharing platform between the Critical Infrastructure/Key Resource sectors. HSIN-CS enables DHS and the critical sector stakeholders to communicate, coordinate, and share information. Through HSIN-CS, users are able to:

- Receive, submit, and discuss timely, actionable, and accurate information;

- Communicate information pertaining to threats, vulnerabilities, security, response and recovery activities affecting sector and cross sector operations; and

- Maintain a direct, trusted channel with DHS and other vetted sector stakeholders.

The primary objectives of HSIN-CS are to generate effective risk management decisions, and to encourage collaboration and coordination on plans, strategies, protective measures, and response/recovery efforts between government, operators, and owners.

HSIN's Way Ahead

Building on HSIN successes, lessons learned, and various recommendations from outside review, the Joint Program Management Office is pushing ahead to ensure that we get relevant information to more of our stakeholders more of the time. As we look to the future, we will continue the recent program enhancements and outreach efforts. Additionally, system enhancement will continue by examining and taking action on additional measures. The JPMO will:

- Assess, and act upon, results from metrics designed to measure a number of aspects of the overall program regarding the effectiveness of information sharing across HSIN. Some areas to be assessed include: the number of users, timeliness of information posted, response times for requests for information, numbers of outstanding and closed action items, and comments posted through the system feedback mechanism.

- Ensure DHS components become more involved in the development of HSIN capabilities, articulate their mission needs as well as the needs of the external partners they sponsor, create a governance structure within their mission areas with regard to HSIN use, and become active participants in shaping the future of the program.

- Evaluate advanced information technologies for incorporation into HSIN such as tools for multi-party real-time collaboration/co-authoring and fine-grained dissemination and user access control to sensitive information products.

- Work with the PM-ISE and the Information Sharing Council to improve business processes and contribute to an Information Sharing Environment that eliminates current "stove-pipes" between programs.

Conclusion

HSIN plays an important role in the information sharing mission of DHS. Additionally, it is critical that all agencies and components are able to monitor HSIN/COP for up-to-date event/threat information when notified via NOC Notification.

HSIN is the information sharing tool that brings together all DHS components and external partners to maximize situational awareness.

Without HSIN, the ability of the Department to share information would be degraded.

Work needs to continue to ensure there is robust connectivity and interoperability with all DHS partners. This is an obtainable goal that will be achieved through methodical, thoughtful collaboration and planning.

HSIN, in conjunction with the COP, is becoming the Department's solution to address the ever-growing need to gather, assess, and share information critical to the Department's overall mission.

Finally, as we improve the HSIN technology and core functionality, we will focus on customer involvement and user satisfaction. Our goal is to improve overall collaboration and situational awareness among Federal, State, Local, and private industry partners.

HSIN is playing a critical role in the government-wide exercises that are currently underway. HSIN and the COP are being utilized for situational awareness and information sharing.

Thank you for this opportunity to testify today and I look forward to answering your questions.