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April 15, 2009

The Honorable Janet Napolitano  
Secretary  
U.S. Department of Homeland Security  
Washington, D.C. 20528

Dear Secretary Napolitano:

I have had an opportunity to review the April 7, 2009 report by DHS's Office of Intelligence and Analysis entitled "Rightwing Extremism: Current Economic and Political Climate Fueling Resurgence in Radicalization and Recruitment," a Law Enforcement Sensitive document I obtained not from DHS, but from open sources via the Internet after public concerns were raised about its contents. As the Ranking Member for the Committee, which is responsible for authorizing funding for this office and ensuring the analytic integrity of Intelligence Community products, I am writing to seek clarification on a number of issues with respect to this report.

As an initial matter, I am concerned that this particular report was not provided to the Committee, even though we receive products of this nature on a regular basis. I would appreciate clarification as to why this report was not provided to the Committee, and an understanding of what other reports DHS may be failing to provide to the Committee.

Second, I would appreciate clarification of several matters with respect to the analysis presented in the report. I am concerned at what appears to be a shoddy, unsubstantiated, and potentially politicized work product that has been disseminated to the Intelligence Community, and law enforcement as a finished intelligence product. The report appears at best sloppy and unprofessional and at worst a representation of political bias being passed off as intelligence analysis by DHS. Such an absence of thorough, careful, substantiated, and useful analysis, unfortunately, appears to be not altogether uncommon in the products we have received from I&A in the past. The potential political bias however, is unusual and makes the importance of careful analysis substantiated by demonstrable facts that much greater.

I would specifically appreciate clarification of what appear to be several questionable, imprecise, and unsubstantiated assertions. The report purports to analyze "rightwing extremism" without defining the term or specifying by name a single group that falls into this category. According to the imprecise analysis contained in the report, "rightwing extremists" could include groups dedicated to opposing abortion or illegal immigration as well as those who may not agree

with the new Administration's "perceived" stance on several issues including illegal immigration and restrictions on firearm ownership. On their face, these statements may appear to cast legitimate viewpoints – in fact some viewpoints that recently constituted Administration policy - in a suspicious light. Without any specific reporting to support such vague statements it is easy to see how they are offensive to many people.

I also share the general concerns that have been raised by the American Legion regarding the suggestion that military veterans returning from service could be more likely to become "rightwing extremists." In support, the report makes vague reference to a 2008 FBI report but does not provide the name or any reference information to that report. An FBI spokesperson downplayed the support allegedly contained in the report. In fact, it is reported that an FBI spokesperson when questioned about the I&A report said: "although the white supremacist movement is of concern to the FBI, our assessment shows that only a very small number of people with prior military experience may have an affiliation with supremacist groups." The analysis also cites as supporting evidence the fact that Timothy McVeigh was a veteran, and an obscure reference to a 2006 report from "a prominent civil rights organization." Is this really the kind of sloppy, ill-sourced, offensive work product we are to expect from DHS six years after its inception?

I would also appreciate an explanation of the assertion, which is somehow tied to "right-wing extremists", that there is a "perception" that illegal immigrants were taking away jobs from Americans in the 1990's because they were willing to work for lower wages. Regardless of one's view on immigration policy matters, it cannot be seriously disputed that the protection of the American workforce is one of the driving considerations for the current structure of U.S. immigration law. For DHS, which is charged with administering the immigration laws, to apparently not understand this core principle is shocking.

Many other assertions contained in the report appear to be equally as ill-sourced and unsupported. The report also highlights certain information that would appear to be of no actionable use to your law enforcement customers. For example, the report highlights an assertion concerning unemployed parents fostering rightwing extremist beliefs in their children at the bottom of page four. I would appreciate clarification of any specific intelligence or other reporting that supports this assertion.

Your partners and customers count on receiving professional intelligence products that will help them protect the security of our homeland. This kind of shoddy reporting calls into question the performance of the Office of Intelligence and Analysis—a primary link between the Department of Homeland Security as well as state and local law enforcement and the Intelligence Community. When may we expect the Office to start consistently producing quality intelligence products?

I am also providing a copy of this letter to the Ombudsman for the Office of the DNI, who is charged with reviewing concerns with respect to the quality and potential politicization of intelligence analysis, for further review.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Pete Hoekstra". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large initial "P" and "H".

Pete Hoekstra  
Ranking Member

cc: Dennis Blair, Director of National Intelligence