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Keynote Address

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Thank you all for your participation in this conference, and for your interest in an area that has grown rapidly in importance during the past six years. When I came to Washington six years ago – immediately after the terrorist attacks we solemnly recalled just yesterday – many of us knew that biometrics were among the emerging tools that would be available to respond to the complex challenge of terrorism. We knew that Moore's law would deliver powerful new information technology, and that the recent development of atomic-level control of material properties would deliver new sensor technologies. And we knew that these two developments could be brought together in powerful systems to aid in the identification and management of the vast flows of individuals at our borders and in other sensitive locations such as centers of transportation, government laboratories, and so forth.

What I did not foresee at that time was the rapid deployment of biometric systems on smaller scales in a multitude of private sector applications including physical and data access control, employee security management, and personnel verification applications in many routine situations. These applications were multiplied by the events of 9/11 when government security officials suddenly began to pay more attention to their use for the functions of homeland security. It was clear in 2001 that federal policies would have to be created to provide for the systematic development of new biometric technologies, and for their introduction in a coherent way across a broad spectrum of federal agencies. My office – the Office of Science and Technology Policy – became deeply involved in biometric issues at that time, and remains involved today. This morning I want to recount some of the history of this involvement, and remind you of the role and operation of OSTP in the coordination of federal technical activity with special reference to biometrics, and give just a glimpse of current priorities and recent activities of the interagency groups we support in this area.

I wear two hats – one for my advisory role to the President and the White House on technical issues, the other for the coordination of science policy and programs across the Executive Branch and for other responsibilities established in statute in the mid 1970's. OSTP carries out its coordinating function through a framework of interagency committees, task forces, and working groups under what is called the National Science and Technology Council (NSTC). According to the Executive Order that established the NSTC in its current form, the Council is chaired by the President and consists of the Cabinet officials of all the agencies dealing in any way with science and technology. In practice all the action occurs at the committee and subcommittee level, and the Council itself never meets. Under the provisions of the Executive Order, departments and agencies agree to provide personnel to staff this committee activity, and the entire structure is managed by a staff executive in my office. Our involvement in biometrics is through a subcommittee of the NSTC.

White House policy offices like OSTP typically do not perform operational functions. But when the terrorists struck six years ago, the White House directed and supported agencies on an emergency basis to ensure a rapid and coordinated response to the unprecedented destruction of lives, property, and logistical functionality. A month later, White House offices again became directly involved in responding to the series of anthrax attacks through the medium of the U.S. mail. To advise the U.S. Postal service on available technologies for dealing with the large volume of contaminated mail, OSTP assembled a team of experts who (among other things) not only developed recommendations on the use of electron beam irradiation and other technologies, but actually carried out research necessary to determine the appropriate radiation levels.

OSTP carried out this activity in support of the White House Office of Homeland Security, formed specifically in response to the threat of terrorism and led by Pennsylvania Governor Tom Ridge. Later, when the President decided to form a new Cabinet level Homeland Security Department, OSTP created and managed the transition team that designed and formed the Science and Technology division of the new agency. The new Department then assumed the operational functions, and the Homeland Security Office morphed into the permanent Homeland Security Council – a parallel organization to the National Security Council and now headed by Frances Townsend.

It was while the new Department was being stood up that OSTP responded to the need for enhanced coordination of multiple agency efforts to identify or develop biometric technology for their intensified homeland security requirements. We did that through the NSTC, which I want to take a few minutes to describe to give you some insight into how this activity links to the White House policy apparatus.

The NSTC is a hierarchy of committees: At the top are four strategic-level committees co-chaired by an OSTP official and an agency chief scientist – committees on science, on technology, on environment and natural resources, and a committee on Homeland and National Security. Under each committee is a series of subcommittees and working groups – nearly four-dozen in all – that focus on specific issue-areas. The membership of the top level committees consists of the chief scientists or equivalent from all relevant agencies, and the subcommittees are staffed by agency experts. OSTP staff participate in the subcommittee activities and keep the business moving. You can find names of all the subcommittees on the OSTP website. The Subcommittee on Biometrics and Identity Management is chartered jointly by the Committee on Technology and the Committee on Homeland and National Security. Its overall co-chair is OSTP's Duane Blackburn, and it has a co-chair for biometrics – Brad Wing from DHS's US-VISIT division, and a co-chair for Identity Management – Jim Dray from NIST. You will hear much more from them shortly, but I want to describe how the subcommittee is organized.

The Subcommittee has an Executive Secretary, currently Michelle Johnson from FBI/SETA (System Engineering and Technical Assistance), and six working groups whose tasks are complementary but linked to accomplish the priority objectives. You will not be surprised to learn that one of the key groups is the on *Interoperability* where agencies work out how they will gain appropriate and tightly controlled mutual access to Biometric information. The priority focus here is on Known and Suspected Terrorists (KST's). Closely related to the issue of

Interoperability is that of *Standards*, whose group has produced a key document titled *"NSTC Policy for Enabling the Development, Adoption and Use of Biometric Standards"*. The document has been entered into the White House staffing system by which all policy documents are vetted prior to final issue. This is how the work of the NSTC groups become national policy. You can see from the title that this is a pretty high level document, describing an approach for establishing interagency consensus on biometric standards. You should see this policy document soon. Presumably it will appear on the Subcommittee's website biometrics.gov that the *Communications* group established to ensure consistency in how the mission and products of the Subgroup are promulgated.

The Biometrics *RDT&E group* is developing a roadmap process to identify high leverage but underfunded areas of research that would enhance the functionality and application of biometrics. Let me pause here to describe how research priorities are formed and how they shape the President's annual budget request to Congress. Through the various NSTC groups agencies identify priorities and work out which agency will do what to achieve them. The high level priorities inform the annual priorities Guidance Memo to Departments and Agencies that OSTP and OMB prepare jointly and which the budget director and I send out to agencies. The agencies include the proposed work in the internal planning and budget documents for their parent departments, and those proposals work their way up to OMB for consideration for inclusion in the President's budget proposal. OSTP is an advocate for the agency plans during this period, and participates in the OMB Director's Review of each agency request. We write much or all of the R&D section of the Budget Request, and act as advocates for the plans that are worked out in the interagency forums. The annual OMB/OSTP guidance memo is available on the OSTP website: ostp.gov. The current memo has a paragraph on biometrics that I would like to read in its entirety:

> "*Biometrics.* Rapid, reliable and accurate biometric-based recognition of individuals is necessary for successful homeland security, counterterrorism, border control, law enforcement, e-commerce and e-government, and identity theft prevention. As directed by the National Security Council's Deputies Committee, agencies are to place emphasis on the priorities outlined in *The National Biometrics Challenge* and the resulting agenda developed by the NSTC Subcommittee on Biometrics and Identity Management. This will advance systems, methods and tools to achieve real-time, verifiable, interoperable, and privacy-protecting root identification. Each agency's plans to fulfill their portion of the agenda, and planned coordination with other agencies, should be highlighted in their budget requests."

The National Biometrics Challenge document, released last year, is included in your package of materials for this conference. Its main function is to identify key challenges in advancing biometrics development across agencies. It acknowledges that the primary driving forces for biometrics in this context are *national security, homeland security and law enforcement, enterprise and e-government services,* and *personal information and business transactions*. And it cites four challenges: *Improvement of collection devices* (biometrics sensors*); More efficient and effective large-scale operational capabilities* (biometrics systems); *establish standards for "plug and play" performance* (biometric systems interoperability); *enable*

informed debate on why, how , and when biometrics should be used (biometrics communications and privacy). The Challenge document includes about one page on each of these drivers and challenges.

There are two more subgroups within the *Subcommittee on Biometrics and Identity Management*, *the Social/Legal/Privacy* group, and the *Science and Technology Assistance group*. The latter is a clearing house, or brokerage for bringing technical assistance immediately to a problem, drawing on federal employee expertise across the Executive Draft.   The Social/Legal/Privacy group is obviously important in the highly sensitive area of sharing personal information among agencies, and even collecting it in the first place. This group will take a very recent document issued by DHS – the Privacy Technology Implementation Guide – and narrow it to biometric issues.

At this point it would be natural for me to tell you more about the long list of topics the NSTC Subcommittee is working on, but you will hear much more about them in other sessions of this conference. So let me stop here and respond to your questions. Thank you once again for your contributions to this important topic.