



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

October 3, 2012

John Hart (Coburn), 202/228-5357

Tara Andringa (Levin), 202/228-3685

Investigative Report Criticizes Counterterrorism Reporting, Waste at State & Local Intelligence Fusion Centers

(WASHINGTON, D.C.) – A two-year bipartisan investigation by the U. S. Senate Permanent Subcommittee on Investigations has found that Department of Homeland Security efforts to engage state and local intelligence “fusion centers” has not yielded significant useful information to support federal counterterrorism intelligence efforts.

“It’s troubling that the very ‘fusion’ centers that were designed to share information in a post-9/11 world have become part of the problem. Instead of strengthening our counterterrorism efforts, they have too often wasted money and stepped on Americans’ civil liberties,” said Senator Tom Coburn, the Subcommittee’s ranking member who initiated the investigation.

The investigation determined that senior DHS officials were aware of the problems hampering effective counterterrorism work with the fusion centers, but did not always inform Congress of the issues, nor ensure the problems were fixed in a timely manner.

“Unfortunately, DHS has resisted oversight of these centers. The Department opted not to inform Congress or the public of serious problems plaguing its fusion center and broader intelligence efforts. When this Subcommittee requested documents that would help it identify these issues, the Department initially resisted turning them over, arguing that they were protected by privilege, too sensitive to share, were protected by confidentiality agreements, or did not exist at all. The American people deserve better. I hope this report will help generate the reforms that will help keep our country safe,” Dr. Coburn said.

“Fusion centers may provide valuable services in fields other than terrorism, such as contributions to traditional criminal investigations, public safety, or disaster response and recovery efforts,” said Senator Carl Levin, Subcommittee chairman. “This investigation focused on the federal return from investing in state and local fusion centers, using the counterterrorism objectives established by law and DHS. The report recommends that Congress clarify the purpose of fusion centers and link their funding to their performance.”

The Department of Homeland Security estimates that it has spent somewhere between \$289 million and \$1.4 billion in public funds to support state and local fusion centers since 2003,

broad estimates that differ by over \$1 billion. The investigation raises questions about the value this amount of funding and the nation's more than 70 fusion centers are providing to federal counterterrorism efforts:

- The investigation found that DHS intelligence officers assigned to state and local fusion centers produced intelligence of “uneven quality – oftentimes shoddy, rarely timely, sometimes endangering citizens’ civil liberties and Privacy Act protections, occasionally taken from already-published public sources, and more often than not unrelated to terrorism.”
- DHS officials did not provide evidence to the Subcommittee showing unique contributions that state and local fusion centers made to assist federal counter terrorism intelligence efforts that resulted in the disruption or prevention of a terrorism plot.
- The investigation also found that DHS did not effectively monitor how federal funds provided to state and local fusion centers were used to strengthen federal counterterrorism efforts. A review of the expenditures of five fusion centers found that federal funds were used to purchase dozens of flat screen TVs, two sport utility vehicles, cell phone tracking devices and other surveillance equipment unrelated to the analytical mission of an intelligence center. Their mission is not to do active or covert collection of intelligence. In addition, the fusion centers making these questionable expenditures lacked basic, “must-have” intelligence capabilities, according to DHS assessments.

“With a \$16 trillion national debt and \$1 trillion annual deficit, Congress has a duty to the American people to ensure that every dollar we are spending – particularly those spent on national priorities like counterterrorism – is spent wisely and effectively,” Dr. Coburn said. “This bipartisan investigation shows that Congress needs to ensure it is getting value for the millions of taxpayer dollars invested in fusion centers.”

The full report is available at the Subcommittee’s website:
<http://www.hsgac.senate.gov/subcommittees/investigations>