

Opening Statement
Ranking Member Rob Portman
U.S. SENATE COMMITTEE ON HOMELAND SECURITY
& GOVERNMENTAL AFFAIRS
“EXAMINING THE ROLE OF THE DEPARTMENT OF HOMELAND SECURITY’S
OFFICE OF INTELLIGENCE & ANALYSIS”
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Thank you, Chairman Peters. It’s important and timely for us to be holding this hearing today to examine the Department of Homeland Security’s Office of Intelligence and Analysis (I&A).

DHS is responsible for protecting the homeland, and I believe its intelligence and analysis capabilities are essential to this effort. I look forward to discussing how to best equip the Department and its partners with critical, timely, and actionable intelligence to keep our nation safe from both foreign and domestic adversaries.

The events of January 6, domestic terrorism, recent attacks on federal facilities and law enforcement, Mexican and other foreign cartel networks operating in our cities, and the ongoing threat posed by foreign terrorists all underscore the need for ongoing intelligence and analysis focused on identifying and mitigating threats to our country.

Since its inception, DHS has had an intelligence office to support its mission. Congress underscored the importance of intelligence and information sharing in the *Implementing Recommendations of the 9/11*

Commission Act of 2007, which formally established the Office of Intelligence & Analysis (I&A).

While one of the smaller agencies in the Intelligence Community (IC), I&A is the only IC member charged with delivering intelligence to our state, local, tribal, territorial, and private-sector partners and developing intelligence from those critical partners for the Department and the IC. To put it simply: I&A is intended to facilitate a key layer of communication and domestic coordination required to safeguard the nation.

In my home state of Ohio, the three fusion centers have benefitted greatly from the partnership with I&A. I have visited the Cincinnati fusion center where I learned the importance of the support and partnership that I&A provides. For example, I recently learned that an I&A intelligence officer at the Columbus fusion center provided critical information on a suspect that had a plot to cause mass violence at large music concert event in Columbus. By leveraging I&A's capabilities, the Columbus fusion center was able to quickly work with law enforcement to locate the suspect and place this individual on TSA's no-fly list. The suspect was then intercepted while attempting to board a flight on his way to Columbus to carry out the attack.

The Committee learned from our oversight investigation into the January 6 attack on the Capitol that I&A fell short in reporting on the potential threat. Security officials have cited the lack of intelligence

and information sharing from I&A and other intelligence agencies as a reason law enforcement was not better prepared to respond. In our investigation, the then Acting Under Secretary of I&A revealed weaknesses in how I&A distributes information, collects intelligence from social media platforms, and leverages its relationships with state, local, tribal and territorial, and private sector partners to learn of new, evolving threats.

Notably, I&A has an important role to play in combatting the transnational criminal organizations (TCOs) – including those responsible for drug trafficking, violence, human smuggling, child exploitation, and a host of other criminal activities. TCOs are always evolving and adapting to maximize their profits as they did as COVID-19 reshaped supply chains and transport patterns. In fact, according to the DEA, once they adjusted to the initial disruption of COVID, Mexican cartels “reinforced supplies of precursor materials, increased production and are sending larger fentanyl and methamphetamine loads into the US.” It seems more important than ever for Federal and local partners to be in close coordination to understand and combat these dynamic threats. And, while these challenges are national, they have hit local communities, including many in my home state of Ohio, particularly hard.

There are a number of issues I hope we will explore today.

There are differing opinions on what I&A's role is in regard to intelligence collection, production, and dissemination. In my view, having timely, quality intelligence is an essential component of keeping our communities safe. I hope today that we can talk about how DHS can appropriately provide these capabilities at a time when we face some threats that are home grown.

The threats we face are dynamic and becoming more complex every day. And they aren't all focused on Washington, D.C. Considering the current environment, how can I&A best leverage the fusion centers and its partnerships with state, local and private sector partners to meet the needs of the department charged with the security of our homeland?

Finally, over the years, I&A has faced challenges in recruiting qualified talent and has experienced consistently low morale and high rates of attrition. I hope that our witnesses can help us understand what can be done to address these longstanding issues.

General Taylor, Ms. Cogswell, Mr. Sena, and Ms. Patel, I am looking forward to your testimony and answers.

Thank you.