

**TESTIMONY OF  
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TEXAS DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC SAFETY**

**ON BEHALF OF  
THE TEXAS FUSION CENTER  
AND  
LOCAL AND REGIONAL FUSION CENTERS OF TEXAS**

**BEFORE THE  
COMMITTEE ON HOMELAND SECURITY,  
SUBCOMMITTEE ON INTELLIGENCE, INFORMATION SHARING, AND  
TERRORISM RISK ASSESSMENT**

**UNITED STATES HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES**

**“The Future of Fusion Centers: Potential Promise and Dangers”**

**APRIL 1, 2009**

Chairwoman Harman, Ranking Member McCaul, and distinguished Members of the Subcommittee: I am here today to speak to you on behalf of the Texas Fusion Center and the six regional and local Urban Area Security Initiative (UASI) Fusion Centers located in Texas. These regional and local centers consist of:

- North Central Texas Fusion Center in Collin County.
- Metro Operations Support and Analytical Intelligence Center (MOSAIC) in Dallas.
- Houston Regional Intelligence Service Center (HRISC).
- Austin Regional Intelligence Center (ARIC)—in development.
- San Antonio Fusion Center—in development.
- El Paso Fusion Center—in development.

These seven centers represent the efforts of 24 state, local, county, and federal agencies to directly support the Department of Homeland Security’s fusion center initiative.

The promise of fusion centers is clear. In and of itself, a fusion center will not end the threat that terrorism, gangs, and organized crime pose to the citizens of the United States. However, a network of multi-agency intelligence centers, sharing and analyzing information, and then passing that information on to decision makers and first line personnel in the field, allows these groups to make better, more informed decisions as they work to thwart the individuals and groups who intend to do us harm. While there have been, in the past, multi-agency taskforce operations on the enforcement side designed to address problems relating to crime and terrorism, the fusion center is the first true comprehensive nationwide program to combine the analytical and informational capabilities of federal, state, county, local, and tribal agencies.

The Department of Homeland Security has been an incredible asset in assisting state and local jurisdictions with the development of fusion centers. Their assistance has been much more than just proposing the concept and providing funding. The DHS has served as a leader by providing personnel to the fusion centers, offering training opportunities, and developing the framework of the Fusion Center Baseline Capabilities. The baseline capabilities provide an invaluable reference for state and local jurisdictions to use as they develop their centers. I would like to compliment the work of Deputy Under Secretary Chet Lunner, Mr. Rob Riegle, and their staffs for all the work they do to assist the state and local centers. They are dedicated to the task, and have been an invaluable resource as the fusion center initiative moves forward. I also would like to recognize Mr. Russ Porter for his contributions to the 2009 National Fusion Center Conference. His hard work and dedication made the conference a great success.

The Texas Fusion Center was formed in 2004 as the Texas Security Alert and Analysis Center (TSAAC). At its inception, TSAAC was a 24/7 watch center for routine information sharing between law enforcement, the collection of Suspicious Activity Reports (SARs) from both the public and law enforcement, and the dissemination of alerts and notifications.

Today, the Texas Fusion Center is a 24/7 statewide intelligence and strategic analysis center where information and intelligence from a variety of sources is exchanged, consolidated, and analyzed by a multi-agency team of analysts. More than 1,500 of the 2,500 law enforcement jurisdictions across the state are connected to the center through the Emergency Response Network (ERN), an Internet-based system that allows the general public and law enforcement to submit SARs directly to the Texas Fusion Center for evaluation and analysis by Fusion Center personnel. The SARs are then forwarded to law enforcement field personnel for investigative follow-up. To date, almost 20,000 SARs have been collected and processed.

The Fusion Center has an impressive list of accomplishments over the years, but we still face a number of challenges: Obtaining sustainability funding, training, achieving baseline capabilities, and developing and adhering to a privacy policy.

Except for the Texas Fusion Center, which operates solely through state funding, all the fusion centers in Texas reported that their continued viability would require some level of federal sustainability funding. It is important that any sustainability funding that is provided to the state and local jurisdictions be designated specifically for fusion centers.

The need for comprehensive and uniform analytical training is a challenge on which DHS will need to focus in the future. Development and deployment of a core curriculum for all analytical personnel will ensure an equal skill level across all fusion centers. Currently, the Texas Fusion Center is working with DHS to bring three analytical training courses to Texas regarding privacy policy and civil liberties, open source reporting, and critical thinking.

At this year's National Fusion Center Conference in Kansas City, the theme was "Achieving Baseline Capabilities." Meeting these capabilities is an important focus of our strategic plan. The DHS personnel deployed to Texas are a valuable resource as the fusion centers work toward identifying and achieving baseline capabilities. The most critical capability for fusion centers to achieve is development and adherence to a privacy policy.

Fusion centers in Texas are directly supported by 24 state, local, county, and federal agencies. This does not include the valuable indirect support the fusion centers receive from countless other agencies who share unprecedented levels of information with the fusion centers. With this paradigm shift to an information sharing environment comes a great responsibility to protect the information from misuse, and to protect the privacy rights and civil liberties of individuals. The fusion centers operating in Texas all recognize this responsibility and have privacy policies in place. With these safeguards in place, it is my belief that fusion centers in Texas can go forward with their mission of dismantling criminal organizations and disrupting terrorist operations without violating the privacy and civil liberties of individual citizens.

In closing, I would like to thank you for the opportunity to appear today and explain the fusion center initiative in Texas and to be able to address any concerns as we move forward.