

Executive Memorandum

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Terrorist Intelligence Centers Need Reform Now

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In response to the September 11 attacks, the Bush Administration undertook significant initiatives to improve information-sharing on terrorist threats, including establishing the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) and creating new inter-agency intelligence integration centers. As the hearings before the National Commission on Terrorist Attacks Upon the United States (the 9/11 Commission) remind us, however, any sharing of information among agencies faces an obstacle course of bureaucratic, cultural, legal, and institutional barriers.

As the Administration implements its post-9/11 efforts, it should organize them for success, avoiding the structural and operational missteps that have marred cooperation among traditional intelligence organizations. Many intelligence functions will rightly remain outside of the DHS, but information-sharing is of such importance that the DHS needs effective oversight of all critical intelligence integration and analysis programs. The DHS needs the responsibility, organization, and resources to be the effective integrator of terrorist intelligence that Congress envisioned when creating the new department.

Where We Are. The Information Analysis and Infrastructure Protection (IAIP) directorate, the Terrorist Threat Integration Center (TTIC), and the Terrorist Screening Center (TSC) were all estab-

lished in the wake of 9/11 to help “connect dots” and “take down walls.”

As stipulated by the Homeland Security Act of 2002, the IAIP was established within the DHS to provide intelligence integration and to merge into one organization the capability to identify and

assess future terrorist threats. The IAIP is also responsible for making recommendations about determining the Homeland Security Advisory System threat level and for issuing appropriate alerts and warnings.

In his January 28, 2003, State of the Union address, President Bush announced the creation of the

TTIC as the single source for the collection and analysis of all terrorism intelligence. The TTIC began operation in May 2003 and was designed to close seams in the terrorist threat-related intelligence process and to provide one organization to gather, assess, and disseminate intelligence information. The TTIC is an interagency organization that reports directly to the Director of Central Intelligence.

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- The TTIC and the TSC should be consolidated with the functions of the IAIP to create a single interagency staff under the supervision of the DHS.
 - Congress should pass legislation that allows the DHS to exercise meaningful budget oversight and staffing support for domestic intelligence integration activities.
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Another recently established initiative is the TSC, an interagency staff responsible for consolidating, deconflicting, and dispensing terrorist watch list information garnered from numerous databases across a variety of agencies. Overseen by the Director of the FBI, the TSC is also an interagency group that works in conjunction with the TTIC.

In addition, the TTIC, the FBI and CIA counterterrorism units, and the FBI's National Joint Terrorism Task Force—but not IAIP—are being collocated in one facility.

Although the TTIC and the TSC are important and necessary for sharing information among federal, state, and local agencies, the Homeland Security Act gave the DHS responsibility for intelligence integration. The DHS, however, does not have primary oversight over either organization. The current arrangement leaves no one person or agency in charge of all these related activities, and it makes the DHS little more than an end-user—competing with other agencies for intelligence support.

The DHS currently lacks the experience, personnel, and facilities to act as a true domestic intelligence integrator. Without the responsibility, organization, and resources to perform this mission, the DHS is unlikely ever to be able to fulfill its congressional mandate.

Where We Need to Be. In order to ensure seamless operation and to prevent the gaps that allowed the September 11 attacks to occur, both the TTIC and the TSC should be consolidated with the functions of the IAIP to create a single interagency staff—"the Homeland Security Threat Integration and Analysis Center"—under the supervision of the DHS. Implementing this new organization will require:

- **Establishing** that appropriations for all agency activities supporting the TTIC and the TSC must be vetted by the DHS. Giving the DHS supervisory responsibility for the TTIC and the TSC is not enough. The DHS must have budgetary oversight of the funding of other agencies contributing to TTIC and TSC. Because the TTIC and the TSC are composed of personnel from several federal entities, the Secretary of Homeland Security must be given review authority for the intelligence-related appropria-

tions of these agencies in order to guarantee the long-term development of capabilities within the interagency structure and to establish priorities to meet current and future threats.

- **Providing** the DHS with the authority to approve, evaluate, and establish the education and experience requirements for all TTIC and TSC staff. Much as the Pentagon's Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff has legislative authority to select qualified military personnel to serve on the joint staff, the DHS must have an appropriate level of control over personnel and training to ensure that the most qualified people fill critical positions and to establish the standards and requirements necessary for best accomplishing assigned missions.
- **Mandating** that state and local law enforcement has the option of participating in the DHS intelligence function. One of the TTIC's most important roles is communicating appropriate information to state and local governments. State and local representation in the TTIC would greatly facilitate this mission by bringing unique perspectives and needs to the process of creating a usable, integrated intelligence picture. The DHS—with the advice and input of the Department of Justice—should select and fund the training and participation of state and local law enforcement.

What Should Be Done. The United States has made significant progress in combating terrorism and protecting the homeland since the deadly attacks of September 11, but much remains to be done. We do not need to wait for the 9/11 Commission's report to improve the current system.

The Administration should integrate and collocate the TSC and the TTIC with the IAIP under the authority of the Secretary of Homeland Security.

Congress should pass legislation that allows the DHS to exercise meaningful budget oversight and staffing support for domestic intelligence integration activities.

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