



TESTIMONY OF

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METROPOLITAN POLICE DEPARTMENT
WASHINGTON, DC**

On behalf of the
MAJOR CITIES CHIEFS ASSOCIATION

Before the
**COMMITTEE ON HOMELAND SECURITY
UNITED STATES HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES**

From Boston to Austin:
Lessons Learned on Homeland Threat Information Sharing

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Good morning, Chairman McCaul, Ranking Member Thompson, and members of the Committee. My name is Peter Newsham, and I am the Chief of Police of the Metropolitan Police Department in the District of Columbia. I am pleased to appear before you today representing the Major Cities Chiefs, an association of Police Chiefs of the largest jurisdictions in the United States. We thank you for convening this hearing on a topic of critical importance to the safety of the people we protect and serve. Although we lead law enforcement agencies in the major urban areas of the United States, we know that law enforcement in agencies of all sizes share the same concerns about the threat of violent extremists and terrorism. There is no higher priority than coming together to share perspectives and lessons learned that may help to prevent these tragedies and protect the communities we serve.

To that end, the Major Cities Chiefs (MCC) has worked closely with the Department of Justice (DOJ), including the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) and the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives (ATF), as well as the Department of Homeland Security (DHS), and other federal agencies to strengthen information sharing since the Boston marathon attacks. Today we will report on progress and discuss next steps in our joint efforts.



Collectively, all of our agencies realize the very real threat of the lone wolf attackers. Individuals may be radicalized by various ideologies at home or abroad, or may be facing significant and untreated mental health issues. Foreign and domestic extremist organizations have made headway in recruiting via the internet and widespread propaganda. While federal agencies may track many of those who go overseas for terrorist training, we have seen a decline in travel for formal training. At the same time, we have seen a growing threat from violent domestic extremists who are motivated by hate and bias. This makes the role of local communities and law enforcement all the more important. It is challenging to identify individuals in the United States who have been radicalized through various forms of propaganda, and harder still to determine which pose a public threat.

Given the significant threat from lone wolf extremists, one of the most important tools in combatting them is local information. One common thread through tragedies in recent years is that there have been warning signs that could be reported by the public and should be recognized by local and federal law enforcement. All too often, conversations about warning signs happen only after a tragedy occurs. We must have a system in place to learn about persons who pose a threat from neighbors, schools, employers, co-workers, and family members, and we must pay attention to these warnings.

For this reason, MCC developed and piloted the Suspicious Activity Reporting Program (SARS) that is now a permanent program at DHS. SARS was designed to provide information to the FBI threat database, E-Guardian. MCC considers the SARS program to be the cornerstone of our information gathering from the community, and believes it should remain a top priority for local and federal law enforcement. We appreciate your support of this significant initiative.

But there may be other effective tools for recognizing threats being developed in our communities. While law enforcement executives like myself rely on our networks to identify



programs, federal support to identify and disseminate technical assistance about innovative and best practices is vital. For instance, there is a growing move to pass state legislation that supports “red flag” laws. The MCC supports and encourages these laws that would provide family and community members with an avenue for seeking court-ordered emergency risk protection orders to consider removing firearms from individuals that pose a threat to the community. This is different than current tools that rely on a specific risk to a targeted individual.



While these programs rely on locally-driven efforts, information sharing is a two-way street. Local agencies can be the eyes and ears to gather information from local communities. Federal agencies, for their part, must share with local law enforcement intelligence from other sources. I will highlight just some of the ways that federal agencies provide critical support for our work in communities.

Following the Boston attack and hearings held by this Committee, MCC engaged with the FBI to review and change a number of policies and procedures. The common purpose of these efforts was to remove barriers to sharing information that could prevent an incident of mass violence. Over a period of months, the FBI considered and approved a comprehensive set of measures to expand participation by local agencies in regional Joint Terrorism Task Force (JTTF) operations and to fully share all case information and threat intelligence. This resulted in barriers coming down. Specific areas of improvement included increasing local access to classified information, expanding responsibilities for local personnel assigned to JTTFs, regular briefings for local agencies on threat intelligence and case activities, and fully embedding local personnel in all aspects of daily JTTF operations.

Major Cities Chiefs has also joined with Major County Sheriffs to form a network of senior intelligence officers from every urban area, an organization without precedent in this country. Each jurisdiction has designated an Intelligence Commander. Working as a team, these Intelligence Commanders exchange information and share intelligence about threats, prevention, and response. We coordinate these efforts with the JTTF in each urban area, the Fusion Centers, and DHS.

MCC appreciates the support of the FBI and DHS for the Intelligence Commanders Network, which is a critical component of MCC’s Criminal Intelligence Enterprise (CIE). The CIE aims to better integrate local criminal intelligence and counterterrorism operations. The effort leverages existing networks such as the JTTF and fusion centers, to improve connectivity between state and local law enforcement resources. The FBI has formally joined with us to establish a common automated platform, called the Threat Reporting Priorities (TRP). The FBI has sponsored both development and maintenance of the platform, as well as training our personnel. Later this month, DHS and the FBI will host a meeting in Houston to move this initiative forward.





These are just a few of the ways that MCC, and local and federal law enforcement work together to protect our communities. While great strides have been made, it is not enough. Recent tragedies are a grim reminder that we are not done yet.

Major Cities Chiefs plans to meet with FBI Director Christopher Wray and executives to review current JTTF and E-Guardian policies to determine how we can further strengthen information sharing. The MCC plans to evaluate the following areas:

- **Common Policies and Procedures:** Chiefs and the FBI must ensure clear and consistent national policies and procedures to support effective intelligence and case information sharing within and between urban area JTTFs and the appropriate local agency heads.
- **Threat Briefings for Urban Areas:** Regular classified threat briefings should be conducted by federal agencies to cover any and all intelligence concerning threats to the major cities, including opening and closing cases.
- **Role of Local Police Personnel:** Detectives, investigators and analysts assigned to JTTFs must be fully embedded and have full access to threat intelligence and case information.
- **Reporting Threat Intelligence:** Policies and practices must encourage, and not restrict, assigned local personnel and federal agents to examine all intelligence databases and to report back to their agencies on potential threats to the community.
- **Intelligence Operations:** Chiefs and the FBI should regularly assess how local intelligence units and fusion centers can support JTTF cases.

In closing, I would like to thank Chairman McCaul, Ranking Member Thompson and the Committee for your strong support of local law enforcement. We know you share our commitment to evaluating and implementing policies and programs that will strengthen the partnership between local law enforcement and federal partners. We are all sworn to serve and protect our communities, a responsibility which must guide all of our efforts.