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Before the

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Subcommittee on Cybersecurity, Infrastructure Protection, and Security Technologies

Examining DHS Science and Technology Directorate's Engagement with Academia and Industry

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311 Cannon House Office Building

Good morning Chairman Ratcliffe, Ranking Member Richmond and distinguished members of the Subcommittee. I am Jake Parker, Director of Government Relations for the Security Industry Association, a non-profit international trade association representing nearly 600 companies that develop, manufacture and integrate electronic and physical security solutions, and employ thousands of technology leaders. Technology provided by the security industry plays a key role in DHS component operations, and in protecting critical infrastructure such as chemical facilities, airports, seaports, mass transit systems, the energy sector and government facilities.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify before you today on the critically important partnership between the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) Science and Technology Directorate (S&T) and the private sector. The input I am providing is based on the experiences of SIA member companies in working with S&T, which I have collected and summarized for you at a high level in order to give you a sense of the nature and direction of this partnership.

I will do my best to answer any questions you may have, however if there is any information requested I cannot provide today, I will be happy to work with our members to provide helpful responses.

New Leadership

Generally we have seen an increase in S&T efforts to engage with industry and believe the partnership is moving in the right direction. I will highlight aspects of planning or programing at S&T we see as positive, as well as several areas identified by our members where there is room for significant improvement.

Since taking the helm of the organization last year, DHS Under Secretary for Science and Technology Dr. Reginald Brothers and his leadership team have set the right tone for improving engagement with industry. In one of his first major speaking engagements following Senate confirmation, Dr. Brothers participated in our association's annual public policy conference, the SIA Government Summit, and gave us a preview of his new vision for the agency. This was articulated further with the release of his "visionary goals" for the organization last year, and just last month with the unveiling of S&T's 2015-2019 strategic plan.

The plan correctly acknowledges that technology is now evolving so quickly that it often outpaces traditional government R&D and acquisition vehicles. Meanwhile, technology-based solutions are more important than ever to achieving DHS component missions. Faced with limited funding and personnel, operators need force-multiplying technology for success. The rapid pace of technology advancement in the security industry, particularly in the identity and biometrics space, holds enormous potential to counter current and future homeland security threats. Harnessing these advances funded by the private sector and developed for commercial and international markets would maximize the return on taxpayer dollars, especially as the technology become more and more affordable through economies of scale.

Effective Use of Industry Expertise

From our perspective, S&T programs that have had the most success are often those that integrate off-the-shelf technology developed commercially, to provide solutions that both meet operational capability gaps and provide new opportunities for industry. Take for example, the Mobile Biometrics Program. The recent Stockton Latent Print Mobile Pilot, concluded in FY2014, demonstrated the results

of putting mobile latent fingerprint capture devices in the hands of law enforcement. Using this force-multiplying technology, latent prints were collected from crime scenes then matched against the local fingerprint search database in as little as 2 minutes. For such projects, even if a federal acquisition does not result, game-changing solutions using products, technologies and new processes may be developed and made available to serve state and local law enforcement needs.

The Biometric Identification at Sea pilot with the Coast Guard, features fingerprint collection and database search using mobile devices, during alien migrant interdiction operations in what is known as the Mona Passage in the Caribbean Sea. Utilizing wireless transfer of data and backend matching to the OBIM/IDENT database, the project resulted in several watch list hits in just the first weeks.

In building on such successes we see value in many aspects of the strategic plan's proposals to further partner with and engage the Homeland Security Enterprise, such as jointly staffed Innovation Centers within DHS components aimed at improving coordination of internally funded component research, late-stage technology development and technology transfer.

The strategic plan calls for ramping up to a "surge effort" on engaging the Homeland Security Industrial Base by FY2016. In order for this to be successful, we have several suggestions for areas of improvement.

Industry as a Stakeholder

When engineered systems are being developed and evaluated, versus stand-alone devices, it is critical that industry be considered a stakeholder in the development process and have an opportunity for input on any end-to-end analysis.

Clear guidelines and assurances need to be provided to DHS S&T personnel with respect to communications with industry participants. In some cases there is a reluctance or fear that sharing information could violate acquisition regulations or other rules, which is usually unfounded. This contributes to a culture biased towards restricting access to technical information and other data that would be helpful to industry in efforts to meet the needs S&T has identified. It would be helpful, in any legislation re-authorizing the Directorate, for Congress to affirm the appropriateness of communications with industry that will help improve program results and ultimately the success of any subsequent acquisition.

Further, improving the identification of high priority operational requirements and capability gaps from DHS component agencies, as envisioned in the strategic plan, is extremely important. Equally important is the communication of this information on needs to industry, and we recommend that it be shared in a systematic way with industry partners. If information on needs is shared openly, industry is far more likely to be able to deliver solutions that solve problems in the real world.

Improving the value proposition of doing business with S&T

S&T project results ultimately help inform component agency decision-making on whether to pursue acquisition, and if pursued which solutions should be acquired versus ruled out. However, some of our members point out that historically, few S&T projects have led to a successful acquisition program. There is also some skepticism as to whether DHS components are fully committed to the S&T projects

they are involved with, due to the risk a component could choose solutions developed through internally funded research programs. While a level of disconnect between S&T and its customers is undoubtedly due in part at least to the fragmented nature of DHS, it is encouraging to see an acknowledgement of this as an issue and several proposals in the strategic plan on how to better coordinate.

We know S&T is grappling with the fact that as a research organization, the Directorate's portfolio is expected to include a mix of high risk/high reward projects that explore extreme approaches to component business/mission challenges, and actionable results that that inform or initiative acquisition.

One of the biggest challenges faced by S&T leadership, as well as Congress in seeking to provide guidance through re-authorization legislation, is how to prioritize and balance the S&T research portfolio. Our members feel that, given the limited size of the S&T budget, the portfolio may be too wide, causing projects to be funded at levels insufficient to be concluded in a timely or successful way. Here, S&T appears to be moving in this direction. Under the strategic plan, S&T estimates that the total number of portfolio projects would be reduced as funding shifts to higher priority programs.

Communications on Opportunities

Communications to industry on opportunities has increased, but it is still fragmented and in need of better coordination. As S&T appears to have provided in a preliminary way within the recent strategic plan, it would be extremely helpful to provide a timeline for achieving project stages as well as deliverables to DHS components.

It takes considerable time and effort to respond to RFIs and requests for white papers. S&T should close the feedback loop by providing confirmation and/or responses that would help industry steer research and product development priorities. Further, the recent increase in number of industry days, speaking engagements and webinars led by S&T leaders has provided increased opportunities for communication with industry and this trend should continue.

Conclusion

What we have heard from S&T leadership on plans to improve industry engagement is very encouraging. Ultimately what matters is whether the strategy can be carried out in a meaningful way. We have identified improving the business case for industry invovlment, ensuring stakeholder input from technology vendors, and communications improvements as key elements to success.

As part of an effort to increase outreach to industry, the Science and Technology Directorate signed a unique memorandum of understanding (MOU) with the Security Industry Association in September 2013, intended to facilitate information sharing that would help "promote the adaptation of electronics-related technological innovation at the federal, state and local level for homeland security applications." SIA is committed to helping facilitate such communication and productive relationships with industry.

On behalf of the Security Industry Association, I appreciate the opportunity to provide collective input from our industry on both the challenges and great opportunities of working with S&T. We stand ready to answer any additional questions or provide any additional input you may need as you craft legislation re-authorizing the DHS Science and Technology Directorate.