

STATEMENT

OF

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BEFORE

THE

HOUSE COMMITTEE ON HOMELAND SECURITY

SUBCOMMITTEE ON EMERGENCY PREPAREDNESS, RESPONSE AND COMMUNICATIONS

U.S. HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

WASHINGTON, D.C.

“Emergency MGMT 2.0:

How @SocialMedia & New Tech are Transforming

Preparedness, Response, & Recovery

#Disasters #Part1 #Privatesector”

JUNE 4, 2013

Good Morning. Chairwoman Brooks, Ranking Member Payne, and Members of the Subcommittee: My name is Jason Payne, and I lead Palantir Technologies' Philanthropy Engineering Team. Thank you for the opportunity to speak with you today.

Palantir Technologies is a Silicon Valley software company based in Palo Alto, California. We build data integration and analysis software for the governmental, private, and public sectors. A key part of our work with NGOs focuses on emergency preparedness, response, and recovery. With our partners Team Rubicon and Direct Relief International, we recently made a Commitment to Action with the Clinton Global Initiative to bring cutting-edge technological capabilities to Voluntary Organizations Active in Disaster, or VOADs.

The fundamental challenge of emergency preparedness, response, and recovery is getting the right resources to the right places, as quickly as possible. We believe that new technology, such as Palantir, significantly improves the ability of organizations to meet that challenge.

Palantir can be rapidly deployed to laptops and smart phones and allows dispatchers and analysts working under critical time pressure to fuse together and analyze large amounts of data from different sources. Originally developed for use by the intelligence and defense community, the platform includes robust, built-in measures to allow users appropriate access and to share information across organizations while protecting privacy and civil liberties.

For example, Direct Relief, a non-profit that donates over three hundred million dollars of medicine every year, uses Palantir to integrate information from their own databases, partnering organizations, and public data from FEMA, DHS, CDC, and NOAA to conduct meteorological, social vulnerability, supply chain, and health risk analyses of areas vulnerable to large storms.

This resulting knowledge enables Direct Relief to pre-position supplies and medicine at Federally Qualified Health Centers (FQHCs) before storms hit, analyze real-time weather data during the storm, and provide emergency medical supplies where they are needed most in the wake of the storm. After Hurricane Sandy, volunteers and staff on the ground used Palantir Mobile to collect and send data to Direct Relief headquarters in real time. Palantir was also used to monitor infectious disease trends and route donated medical resources to the areas in greatest need.

While Direct Relief uses Palantir to make big picture strategic decisions about resource allocation, Team Rubicon, a group of veterans engaged in disaster relief, uses Palantir to tactically understand the operational environment during a disaster response. During the response to Hurricane Sandy, Team Rubicon used Palantir's mobile phone application to quickly survey over 1500 structures in the Rockaways. Fusing those surveys with public 311 data, and even paper requests for help collected in a church parking lot, several hundred Team Rubicon members were able to efficiently harness over 14,000 spontaneous community volunteers—a tremendous resource that has often been underutilized in disaster scenarios.

During the Sandy aftermath, those volunteers removed sand, saltwater, and sheetrock from damaged homes before mold set in, keeping people in their homes. That success was possible because of social

media, Team Rubicon's leadership, and the data integration, knowledge management, and efficient planning that Palantir facilitated.

As part of our Clinton Global Initiative commitment, Direct Relief, Team Rubicon, and Palantir are collaborating on recovery efforts in Oklahoma City after the devastating tornadoes on May 20th and 31st. Leveraging on the ground surveys collected with Palantir Mobile, along with Google, NWS, HRSA, and local parcel data, these organizations are working together to help with both health and infrastructure response and recovery. Most importantly, the common operating picture that they are building with Palantir is being shared with other VOAD and governmental organizations active in the area.

Through trial and error, as well as success and failure, we've learned a few important lessons that we would like to share with the committee.

First, open data portals are more important than formal information exchange models. In the context of emergency response data sharing, we believe that holding out for perfect gets in the way of good enough. We encourage governmental organizations to adopt a Silicon Valley approach to data interoperability – put the data out publicly in a robust, standardized, well documented interface and let other organizations come up with innovative ways to leverage the data. This is why Palantir makes a strong commitment to openness and provides programmatic query languages and web services to make all data in Palantir open. We applaud NOAA, NWS, and the Census Bureau, among others, for taking this approach.

Second, internet and cloud technology, such as social media, are extremely valuable as long as people have power and connectivity. Without both, it's useless. We encourage the subcommittee to explore innovative solutions to provide deployable 3/4G mobile networks, as well as mobile device charging stations, to the public during large-scale emergencies. We applaud the idea of the FirstNet initiative from the Department of Commerce, and suggest that the network be opened up to key non-profit organizations as well as governmental agencies.

Lastly, we would like to highlight the need for a more robust conversation about data access, sharing, and retention to ensure that the privacy and civil liberties of those affected by emergencies and disasters are respected at all times. When a disaster occurs, thousands of volunteers seek to help vulnerable people get back on their feet. There are also a few unscrupulous bad actors that seek to exploit and profit from those vulnerable people. Data can empower those altruistic volunteer efforts, but without correct data access and sharing technology, that same data can empower those bad actors.

We believe that public data such as locations of shelters and medical facilities, power status reports, and satellite imagery should be available to all organizations and citizens. We also believe that sensitive information, such as names, dates of birth, addresses, phone numbers, social media posts, financial information and certainly medical information should be shared with only those with need to know that information, even within an organization.

Furthermore, we recommend that sensitive data collected during an emergency should be deleted when reasonably possible after emergencies. We encourage the development of clear data retention policies

for all volunteer and governmental organizations that work in the preparation, response, and recovery lifecycle. These retention policies should be clearly communicated with affected individuals, state and local entities, commercial organizations, and VOADs to encourage all parties to share pertinent information.

New technology enables a whole new era of disaster response. We are humbled to be a part of that transformation and look forward to more work in the future to help those affected by disaster get back on their feet.

This completes my prepared statement. Thank you again for the opportunity to join you all here today.