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The Subcommittee investigation found that DHS-assigned detailees to the fusion centers forwarded “intelligence” of uneven quality—oftentimes shoddy, rarely timely, sometimes endangering citizens’ civil liberties and Privacy Act protections, occasionally taken from already-published public sources, and more often than not unrelated to terrorism. Congress directed the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) to lead this initiative. A bipartisan investigation by the Permanent Subcommittee on Investigations has found, however, that DHS’s work with those state and local fusion centers has not produced useful intelligence to support Federal counterterrorism efforts.

The Subcommittee investigation also found that DHS officials’ public claims about fusion centers were not always accurate. For instance, DHS officials asserted that some fusion centers existed when they did not. At times, DHS officials overstated fusion centers’ “success stories.” At other times, DHS officials failed to disclose or acknowledge non-public evaluations highlighting a host of problems at fusion centers and in DHS’s own operations.

Since 2003, over 70 state and local fusion centers, supported in part with Federal funds, have been created or expanded in part to strengthen U.S. intelligence capabilities, particularly to detect, disrupt, and respond to domestic terrorist activities. DHS’s support for and involvement with these state and local fusion centers has, from the beginning, centered on their professed ability to strengthen Federal counterterrorism efforts.

Under the leadership of Senator Coburn, Ranking Subcommittee Member, the Subcommittee has spent two years examining Federal support of fusion centers and evaluating the resulting counterterrorism intelligence. The Subcommittee’s investigative efforts included interviewing dozens of current and former Federal, state and local officials, reviewing more than a year’s worth of intelligence reporting from centers, conducting a nationwide survey of fusion centers, and examining thousands of pages of financial records and grant documentation. The investigation identified problems with nearly every significant aspect of DHS’s involvement with fusion centers. The Subcommittee investigation also determined that senior DHS officials were aware of the problems hampering effective counterterrorism work by the fusion centers, but did not always inform Congress of the issues, nor ensure the problems were fixed in a timely manner.

Regarding the centers themselves, the Subcommittee investigation learned that a 2010 assessment of state and local fusion centers conducted at the request of DHS found widespread deficiencies in the centers’ basic counterterrorism information-sharing capabilities. DHS did not share that report with Congress or discuss its findings publicly. When