

DHS Secretary Napolitano, Missouri Governor Nixon Address Annual National Fusion Center Conference



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Kansas City, Mo. – Department of Homeland Security Secretary Janet Napolitano and Missouri Gov. Jay Nixon today addressed the federal, state and local officials attending the third annual National Fusion Center Conference in Kansas City, which is taking place March 10-12.

Close to 1,000 state, local, tribal, territorial and federal partners involved in state and major urban area fusion centers across the country attended the conference, which offered fusion center stakeholders opportunities to learn more about privacy and civil liberties and exchange best practices, new trends, tools, technologies, and processes that can help them improve information and intelligence sharing and collaboration across all levels of government.

Fusion centers are the state and major city facilities that the 9/11 Act recommended as the best way for federal, state, local, tribal and territorial governments and the owners and operators of critical infrastructure to share information and intelligence about terrorist threats, criminal activity and other hazards. Since the fusion center initiative began in 2006, states and major cities have stood up some 70 centers across the country, with the federal government providing personnel, financial and technical support.

The initiative has included diligent attention to fostering a climate of respect for civil rights and liberties in fusion centers. The federal government, through the DHS Office for Civil Rights and Civil Liberties, the DHS Privacy Office and the Department of Justice's Bureau of Justice Assistance, provides training, technical assistance and guidance to ensure that the privacy and civil liberties policies established by fusion centers are consistent with federal guidelines.

The Department of Homeland Security directed more than \$327 million in funding during fiscal years 2004 to 2008 to fusion centers.

"At the Department of Homeland Security, information and intelligence sharing is a top priority and fusion centers play an important role in helping to make that happen," said Secretary Napolitano. "In the world we live in today, it's critical for federal, state, local and tribal entities to know what the others are doing so each can operate effectively and efficiently."

"Protecting our country requires a partnership of federal, state and local resources that are fully integrated to not only gather and analyze information, but then to swiftly share that information with appropriate agencies," Governor Nixon said. "Fusion centers represent the honing of these protective efforts, while strongly protecting individual rights and civil liberties. They are a vital part of keeping our nation strong, safe and free."

Federal Bureau of Investigation Director Robert S. Mueller, III, said: "Fusion centers build upon the FBI's tradition of strong partnerships with our federal, state, local, and tribal counterparts and maximize our ability to detect, prevent, and investigate criminal and terrorist activities."

Russell Porter, director of the Iowa Intelligence Fusion Center and chair of the Association of Law Enforcement Intelligence Units and of the Criminal Intelligence Coordinating Council, said: "In this post 9/11 era, it takes a network to defeat a network. Our national integrated network of fusion centers helps us protect our communities and our country by sharing information and intelligence more effectively, while fulfilling our solemn obligation to uphold constitutional rights and liberties as the public expects and deserves."

Ambassador Ted McNamara, Program Manager for the Information Sharing Environment, said: "State and major urban area fusion centers are critical components of the Information Sharing Environment and an important part of our nation's efforts to protect local communities from crime and violence, including terrorism. Fusion centers

must be given the tools and resources they need so that they can become centers of analytic and information sharing excellence and at the same time operate in a transparent manner that fully protects the privacy and civil liberties of Americans."

The National Fusion Center Coordination Group (NFCCG), the conference organizer, developed an agenda focused on strengthening the integrated national network of state and major urban area fusion centers that share information and intelligence with the federal government and each other. The conference will support attendee efforts to achieve the capabilities outlined in the seminal document, *Baseline Capabilities for State and Major Urban Area Fusion Centers*, through workshops, learning labs, and plenary sessions. This year's conference highlighted the importance of these capabilities through its theme, *Achieving Baseline Capabilities*.

The NFCCG is cochaired by the Department of Homeland Security and Federal Bureau of Investigation, in partnership with the Department of Justice, Office of the Director of National Intelligence, the Office of the Program Manager, Information Sharing Environment, and the Global Justice Information Sharing Initiative.

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