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Statement for the Record of  
John O. Brennan  
Director, Terrorist Threat Integration Center

on  
**The Homeland Security Advisory System: Improving Preparedness  
through Effective Warning**

Before the  
House of Representatives Select Committee on Homeland Security  
Washington, D.C.

Good afternoon, Chairman Cox, Ranking Member Turner, and the Members of the House Select Committee on Homeland Security.

I appreciate the opportunity to join the Deputy Secretary of the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) to discuss how terrorist threat-related information supports the Homeland Security Advisory System (HSAS).

As Committee Members well know, U.S. interests at home and abroad remain at risk of terrorist attack. Usama Bin Laden and Al Qa'ida represent the most significant terrorist threat; however, there are many other known and suspected terrorist individuals and groups with an interest and the capabilities to do us harm. Since the tragic events of September 11, 2001, many steps have been taken to prevent future attacks. One of the most significant steps has been the creation and implementation of a national, color-coded Homeland Security Advisory System.

The HSAS was originally established in March 2002 as a mechanism to inform the public during periods of elevated threats. TTIC supports the HSAS through the provision of terrorist threat-related information and analysis to those charged with administering the process.

TTIC is a multi-agency joint venture that opened for business in May 2003, to integrate terrorist-threat related information, collected domestically or abroad, to form a comprehensive threat picture. On a daily basis, TTIC coordinates terrorist threat assessments with partner agencies, including DHS, Federal Bureau of Investigation, the Central Intelligence Agency, Department of Defense, and Department of State. Assignees from these partner departments and agencies have, of course, been involved in the production of these assessments prior to coordination with their headquarters. Twice daily, these assessments and others are discussed during interagency secure video teleconference meetings to discuss the current threat picture. DHS, TTIC, and others coordinate regularly on a product that combines threat information with actions being taken to protect the Nation against those threats. This multi-agency coordination process is enabling the USG to better know what we know, compare information, and make rational decisions based on a more comprehensive threat picture.

When threat information dictates, TTIC participates in special meetings that are convened to determine whether to recommend to the Secretary of Homeland Security and other senior officials that the Homeland Security Advisory System condition should be adjusted. Last December 2003, for instance, TTIC – in close coordination with our partner entities - published a Holiday threat assessment that facilitated multi-agency discussions resulting in a decision to elevate the national threat level to “orange.” TTIC’s threat assessments played an important part of the risk evaluation strategy that was used in making decisions related to the threat level.

Another aspect of national preparedness and effective warning of terrorist threats to the U.S. and U.S. interests abroad, is more systematic information sharing across the intelligence, law enforcement, and homeland security communities. Progress has been made toward ensuring that all obligations are met, as detailed in applicable statutes and interagency agreements such as the Homeland Security Act and the Homeland Security Information Sharing Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) of March 2003, signed by Secretary Ridge, Attorney General Ashcroft, and Director of Central Intelligence (DCI) Tenet. On behalf of the DCI, and in close coordination with all partner entities, TTIC is facilitating efforts within the Intelligence Community to provide the Department of Homeland Security access to all information and analytic products required to execute its mission.

Within TTIC, there is connectivity with 14 separate USG networks, allowing for unprecedented, near-real-time information sharing – the key to our support to the Homeland Security Advisory System. A primary conduit for information sharing across the intelligence, law enforcement, and homeland security communities is a TTIC-sponsored, classified website called TTIC Online. This website currently has over 2,500 users throughout the Federal government, and it is being updated to support collaboration and information sharing at varying levels, from Top Secret to Sensitive-But-Unclassified. The website is also being updated to enable users to search across disparate USG-maintained data sets and to enable account holders from multiple Federal departments and agencies to post relevant information for collective access.

In addition, TTIC is working with DHS and the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) to ensure that all relevant threat information and analysis is expeditiously passed to state and local officials and law enforcement personnel, so that they may re-evaluate and adjust protective measures to prevent a possible attack. This rapid sharing of threat information with those working to disrupt potential terrorist activity is a critical area of emphasis in the national homeland security effort – some call state and local officials and law enforcement personnel our “first responders,” but if the information reaches them in time to apply appropriate protective measures, they are really our “first and last defenders.” For this reason, TTIC and others across the intelligence, law enforcement, and homeland security communities are working together to implement “write to release” and other innovative business processes to increase the number of sanitized and unclassified products available for rapid dissemination to better enable state, local, private industry, and foreign partners to implement protective measures in the Global War on Terrorism.

In conclusion, through collective effort, we are making daily progress toward improving National preparedness through the HSAS and the effective warning of the Nation.