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## PRACTICE NOTE

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### Intelligence and Information Sharing: The Alabama Fusion Center's Response to "White Powder" Mailings

#### PRACTICE

The Alabama Fusion Center (AFC) responded quickly to a December 2008 "white powder" letter mailed to the Alabama governor's office and communicated details of the threat to other state fusion centers. This allowed authorities in those states to respond appropriately to the threat.

#### DESCRIPTION

The Alabama Department of Public Safety established the AFC in 2008 to help facilitate the exchange of intelligence and information among all law enforcement agencies in the state. The AFC serves as an "all-crimes" fusion center that investigates both criminal and terrorist threats. Through its partnership with the Alabama Criminal Justice Information Center (ACJIC), the AFC has access to a wide range of law enforcement databases and information technology tools that aid in law enforcement investigations.

The ACJIC collects, stores, retrieves, analyzes, and disseminates criminal justice data on behalf of the state of Alabama. ACJIC operates a 24-hour command center to provide and assist criminal justice agencies across the state with accessing the center's information databases. Please refer to the [ACJIC Web site](#) for more information.

On December 8 and 9, 2008, letters containing an unknown white powdery substance were mailed to governors' offices in Alabama, Alaska, Michigan, Minnesota, Mississippi, Missouri, Montana, and Rhode Island. Alabama was the second state to receive such a letter, after Mississippi. State and federal law enforcement agencies determined that none of the letters contained any harmful substances and that no individuals had been infected with any biological or chemical agents.

Following the letter's discovery at the Alabama governor's office, public safety officials requested that the AFC conduct an investigation to determine if the mailings had a nexus to terrorism. The governor's office supplied the AFC with photos of the envelope and letter as well as a description of the letter's contents. Additionally, an officer on-scene at the Alabama governor's office notified the AFC that he had heard of a similar letter discovered at the Mississippi governor's office that same day. Six AFC analysts then decided to telephone all remaining state fusion centers to notify them of what had occurred in both Alabama and Mississippi. AFC analysts also drafted a threat bulletin that contained photos of the front and back of the letter, specific details of the incident, and the steps that Alabama law enforcement agencies had taken to address the threatening letter.

The AFC's prompt analysis of the incident and dissemination of critical information to other fusion centers allowed other states to anticipate the threat and to prepare accordingly. Based upon the information provided by the AFC, several states were successfully alerted to the potential threat of a "white-powder" mailing.

#### **CITATION**

Johnson, Sandra. Criminal Intelligence Analyst, Alabama Fusion Center. Interview with *Lessons Learned Information Sharing*, 17 June 2009.

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