



United States Senate
Committee on Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs
Chairman Joseph I. Lieberman, ID-Conn.

Opening Statement of Chairman Joseph Lieberman
“Information Sharing in the Era of Wikileaks: Balancing Security and Collaboration”
Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs Committee
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As Prepared for Delivery

The hearing will come to order. Good afternoon and thanks for your patience. In just six months and a day we will mark the 10th anniversary of the attacks of 9/11 and we will honor the memory of the nearly three thousand people who were murdered that day in America.

Our mourning over their deaths has always been compounded by the knowledge that those attacks might have been prevented, certainly that was the implication of the 9/11 Commission report, had our intelligence and law enforcement agencies shared the disparate facts they had gathered, enabling us to connect the dots.

To prevent this from happening again, Congress passed several laws intended to strengthen information sharing among critical federal agencies. Those acts included the Homeland Security Act, the Intelligence Reform and Terrorism Prevention Act and the Patriot Act.

Since then, the executive branch, I think, has made significant improvements in its information sharing systems and there is no question that far more information is now available to partners in other agencies who have a legitimate need for it.

All this intelligence is further brought together at key nodes, such as the National Counterterrorism Center, where it can be examined by intelligence specialists from a variety of agencies working together under one roof.

And, as a result, we have seen a number of successes in recent domestic and military counter-terrorism operations that I think were thanks to this information sharing – and I’m going to cite some examples in a moment.

But this Committee’s recent report on the Fort Hood attack shows that information sharing within and across agencies is nonetheless still not all it should be – and that allowed in that case a “ticking time bomb” namely Maj. Nidal Hasan, now accused of killing 13 and wounding 32 others at Fort Hood– to radicalize right under the noses of the Department of Defense and the FBI.

So we need to continue improving our information sharing strategies. Now, I fear, the Wikileaks case has become a rallying cry for an overreaction for those who would take us back to the days before 9/11 when information was considered the property of the agency that developed it and was not to be shared.

The bulk of the information illegally taken and given to Wikileaks would not have been available had that information not been on a shared system, the critics of information sharing argue.

But to me this is putting an ax to a problem that requires a scalpel and misunderstands that happened in the Wikileaks case and misstates the solution to the problem. We can and must prevent another Wikileaks without also enabling federal agencies, perhaps compelling federal agencies to reverse course and return to a pre-9/11 culture of hoarding information.

We need to be smarter about how information is shared, and appropriately balance security concerns with the legitimate needs of the users of different types of information. Methods and technologies for doing so already

exist, some of them I gather have been put into place since the Wikileaks case, and we need to make sure that we utilize them as fully as possible across our government.

The bottom line is we must not walk away from the progress that has made us safer and saved lives. I'll give you two quick examples:

U.S. Special Forces and elements of the intelligence community have shared information and worked exceptionally well together in war zones to combat and disrupt terrorist groups such as Al Qaeda in Iraq and the Taliban in Afghanistan. And that would not happen without information sharing.

Here at home, we have used information sharing to enhance the role of state, local, tribal and private sector entities in our fight against terrorists.

And those efforts have paid off – most recently in the case of a chemical supply company in North Carolina that alerted the FBI to suspicious purchases by a Saudi Arabian student in Texas who turned out to be building Improvised Explosive Devices.

So we need to fix what is broken without going backwards. Today I look forward to hearing from each of our witnesses about what they are planning to do to improve the security of classified networks and information, while still ensuring that information is shared effectively in the interest of our nation's security.

I also want to hear how Congress can work with you on these efforts with either legislation or through more targeted funding.

Efficiently sharing, while effectively securing, information is critical to our nation's security and our national values. We can and must have both.

Senator Collins.