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FCLP participants further define, coalesce national network of fusion centers

After outlining the biggest domestic terrorism events of 2013 — from Sandy Hook Elementary School and Boston Marathon to the Los Angeles International Airport shootings with several other attacks in between — Scott McAllister offered some sobering foresight to 30 students attending Naval Postgraduate School for the Center of Homeland Defense and Security's (CHDS) Fusion Center Leaders Program (FCLP).

"Within the next year, at least one of you will be engaged in a significant event where you will be called upon to show your leadership to your agency, your partners and the nation," said McAllister, Deputy Under Secretary for State and Local Programs with the Department of Homeland Security's Office of Intelligence and Analysis.

McAllister was a featured speaker at the FCLP conducted November 18-22 and attended by fusion center leaders from 22 states, the District of Columbia and several federal agencies. CHDS, along with the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) and interagency partners, established the program in 2010 to mature and strengthen the management capabilities of fusion center leaders through academic homeland security, law enforcement, and intelligence-based coursework. This was the seventh cohort for the program.



"The FCLP is in its fourth year and it is impressive how fusion center leaders are increasingly dedicated to the homeland security intelligence mission," said program director Robert Simeral of the NPS faculty. "The leaders arrive in Monterey believing the attributes and challenges of their fusion centers are unique. After a full week of collaborating with their nation-wide counterparts at Naval Postgraduate School, the leaders realize that similar challenges and opportunities exist throughout the national network. Fusion center leaders will comment that FCLP is absolutely essential to fully understanding and examining their organization's performance and to increase relevance within the homeland security enterprise."

Topics included particulars on fusion center operations, such as intelligence collection and analysis, as well as sessions on leadership and management. McAllister's session was on leadership, in which he used significant incidents of 2013 as discussion platforms to address leadership styles. Many in attendance during FCLP #7 played leading roles at fusion center s during those events.

McAllister further emphasized the importance of fusion centers play in analyzing trends, as so many plots unfold in smaller towns with big-city targets in mind.

"Many of those events (in 2013) had a cross-state nexus," he said. "Who is best equipped to spot those anomalies in our communities? It's you guys." McAllister further emphasized that "fusion centers are the nexus between national security and homeland security."

While the coursework is regularly updated, participants say the FCLP networking and face-to-face contact with peers, long before an incident erupts, is equally essential in ensuring fusion centers function optimally.

"The most useful aspect has been understanding the problems that fusion centers face on the local, state and federal level and how to gain partnerships to aid intelligence collection," said Len Marie, Deputy Director of the Louisiana State Analytical & Fusion Exchange. "It's good to meet our peers face to face. You know they are working through the same issues. The whole information sharing process is about building relationships."

Thinking critically on issues facing fusion center was a complementary benefit to the program content, said Ashley Wilson, Director of the Joint Regional Intelligence Center in Los Angeles.

"The theme from the outset was critical thinking on issues," she said. "Each of has to define our key question for or own Center. So just being able to frame the right questions to take back to my team for discussion has been very beneficial."

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About the [Fusion Center Leaders' Program \(FCLP\)](#).

Col. David Sankey, Superintendent of the Nebraska State Patrol, said the program helped him better define the role of his state's fusion center — the Nebraska Information Analysis Center — and how it can provide value to its customers.

"Through the discussions at the FCLP, I gained valuable information about how other fusion centers operate and insight into building long term sustainability," Sankey said.

The FCLP, which is sponsored by the U.S. Department of Homeland Security (DHS), was developed based on input from interagency partners, including the Office of the Director of National Intelligence (ODNI), Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI), and Department of Justice (DOJ), and state and local partners through the Criminal Intelligence Coordinating Council (CICC) and National Fusion Center Association (NFCA).

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