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Second Fusion Center Leaders Program Conducted

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As the nature of homeland security threats evolve, the ability of fusion centers to exchange intelligence among each other as well as with foreign sources is increasingly important. And that, said two leading experts on fusion centers, is what make the [Fusion Centers Leaders Program \(FCLP\)](#) at the Naval Postgraduate School Center for Homeland Defense and Security so critically important.

As some 25 fusion center managers gathered for the second edition of the FCLP conducted Nov. 8-12, two speakers for the seminar said the latest educational offering from CHDS was critical on two fronts – developing a network of fusion center leaders and cultivating better cooperation between foreign and domestic security partners.



“The course has a lot of value because as new fusion center directors come on board, we need to make sure they are given the information and support that they need,” said Bart Johnson, principal deputy under secretary for Intelligence and Analysis with the U.S. Department of Homeland Security (DHS). “This course gives them the opportunity to meet one another and support one another as we build a national network of fusion centers.”

The program, sponsored by DHS, was developed based on recommendations 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).

“The goal of the FCLP is to enhance the management capabilities across the national network of fusion centers and enable best practices in information sharing and leadership at the nation’s 72 fusion centers.

The need for more seamless information sharing among federal agencies and their state and local partners has taken on heightened urgency,” said Peter Lavoy, Director of Analysis, Office of the Director of National Intelligence.

“This program (the FCLP) is important because the nature of threats to the country has changed since 9/11,” Lavoy said. “You have cases where there are people operating within the United States on plots generally hatched from outside. So, you need a fusion of intelligence to pick up leads, to pursue those leads, fusing the foreign and domestic.”

Lavoy noted examples of cases such as Times Square bomber Faisal Shahzad, accused Fort Hood gunman Major Nadal Hassan and Carlos Bledsoe, accused of shooting two soldiers and killing one of them at an Army recruiting office in Arkansas. Improvement is needed in sharing foreign intelligence with domestic partners, and vice versa, Lavoy said, adding, “It’s a two way street, not just foreign intelligence to states, but also fusion information processed from local sources into reports valuable to foreign intelligence. It’s a two-way street and I think both sides of that street need to be a little better paved.”

The sessions highlighted fusion center critical operational capabilities, including (1) ability to receive classified and unclassified information from federal partners; (2) ability to assess local implications of threat information through the use of a formal risk assessment process; (3) ability to disseminate threat information to other state, local, tribal,

territorial, and private sector entities within their jurisdiction; and, (4) the ability to collect, aggregate, analyze and share locally generated information with federal partners.

CHDS faculty member Robert Simeral said the course curriculum was tweaked based upon feedback from the first FCLP. “This continuous improvement effort allows CHDS to keep the FCLP relevant,” Simeral said. “Perhaps the course’s big takeaway for the week is that fusion center leaders are focused and actively addressing the mission and relevancy of their fusion centers. CHDS expects to conduct another FCLP in the spring of 2011, he added.

Homeland security professionals attending the program in November said there was an abundance of practical information to take back to their home agencies. Prioleau Green, deputy chief with the Cleveland (Ohio) Division of Police and a CHDS master’s degree graduate, said he gained insights in setting intelligence requirements both during class and in the contacts he made during the week.

“I see that some of the problems in our fusion center are the same ones as in other fusion centers,” Green said. “I can get copies of other centers’ policies and use them to help set our intelligence requirements.”

Connie Farrow, assistant director with the Missouri Information Analysis Center, said she found discussions on Terrorism Liaison Officers (TLO) to be helpful information that she will be able to apply at her center. Lt. Charles McNeal of the Louisiana State Police said the program was unique in that it focused exclusively on fusion center management issues, such as risk mitigation. “I liked the different perspectives from the instructors. It was more geared toward us (fusion centers),” he said.

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