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In FCLP, fusion center leaders strengthen their roles in homeland security and readiness

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The Naval Postgraduate School Center for Homeland Defense and Security [Fusion Center Leaders Program](#) convened for its 13th iteration November 16-20 with 27 participants attending.

“We are into our sixth year of offering a leaders program that is making a difference,” FCLP Program Manager Robert Simeral said. “The national network of fusion centers is benefiting from the knowledge and collaboration with peer leaders that this program provides. We hear often that graduates from FCLP have moved their fusion centers into much more effective organizations that together will raise the strength of the national network.”

Established six years ago, the program offers leadership education for fusion center professionals. The breadth of topics discussed was among the biggest benefits of the program, said Anthony Crispino, General Counsel for the District of Columbia Homeland Security and Emergency Management Agency.

“The ensuing conversations and debates really opened my eyes to some issues that I didn’t know about or didn’t give much thought to,” he noted.

A mark of the program’s value is that participants can take practical, hands-on information back to implement at their agencies, and that was true for Crispino. Based on discussions regarding privacy and community outreach he plans working with his agency to update its webpage in an effort to educate the public about its function as well as to promote transparency.

The sessions provide the opportunity to freely deliberate with peers from around the country and develop ideas to implement at home.

“In this environment you are more able to collaborate cohesively. It’s very wide open. You can speak candidly and talk about different ideas,” said Shaw Corey, Fusion Center Deputy Director with the Connecticut State Police. “To have these folks here, the speakers and people from the various bureaus, gives you a different perspective. It’s a remarkable week sharing experiences and seeing that the fusion center concept is really dealing with the same struggles across the country.”

The gathering enables many students to plug into a network of fusion center professionals and also learning of the varied resources available to strengthen their operations.

“Networking is, obviously, something you can back back home,” said Guy Cameron of the Wyoming Office of Homeland Security. “We can enhance our network to support the goals of our analysis center.”

For Naomi Burke, the DEA Manager of the Central Valley California High Intensity Drug Trafficking Area (HIDTA) Investigative Support Center, the FCLP provided information that could be useful for her agencies. . Both - investigative support centers and intelligence fusion centers have similar resources and face similar challenges,



such as privacy issues.

“It was interesting to learn more about the fusion center network and not just how the DEA connects with it but how a High Intensity Drug Trafficking Area (HIDTA) can plug into the network as well,” Burke said. “Also, the operations the fusion center encounters are the same problems I do in terms of being aware of civil liberties. I’m taking back ideas of how to be proactive in training on that issue.”

Presenters Braden Schrag and Sasha Larkin of the Las Vegas Metropolitan Police talked about a new program their agency recently launched that, while aimed at lowering crime and improving lives, could also lead to fusion centers receiving a greater amount of information originating from community sources. Their department recently established an Office of Community Engagement that focuses on awareness, communication, outreach and engagement of the social media prone 18- to 24-year-old demographic. The program is a holistic approach that seeks intervention before a youth gets into gangs, prostitution or theological radicalization while providing social skills for those seeking to exit such a lifestyle. The voluntary program also includes training for officers on interacting with diverse communities.

The payoff for fusion centers?

“If we’re making people aware, the natural by-product is increased reporting,” Larkin said. “The more reporting we have the more we can see and monitor trends.”

As terrorism and mass shooting events in the nation and around the world proliferate, fusion center and programs supporting them have become an invaluable component of the homeland security enterprise.

“While countries overseas are working to track down those responsible for the recent terror attacks, here at home our fusion center leaders are working everyday to prevent one from happening,” Simeral noted. “The NPS FCLP serves to help unify those efforts.”

The FCLP is sponsored by the Department of Homeland Security and was developed based on input in partnership the Office of the Director of National Intelligence and Federal Bureau of Investigation, as well as state and local partners through the Criminal Intelligence Coordinating Committee and the National Fusion Center Association.

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