

# Remarks by Homeland Security Secretary Janet Napolitano to the National Fusion Center Conference in Kansas City, Mo. on March 11, 2009

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**Secretary Napolitano:** Thank you. Thank you, and good afternoon. It's great to see all of you here.

What I want to do this afternoon with our time together is to speak briefly about where I think the future of Fusion Centers is going and where the Department of Homeland Security is going to go in light of that future, and then we're going to open up the floor for questions. I understand there's some microphones in the room, so please feel free to ask questions.

You know, sometimes when I've said that I'm going to speak briefly, people look at me and they say, well, you know, Janet, you're a lawyer. You were in politics, now you're -- now you're a Fed. So why don't you describe what you mean by briefly? I will define it this way. I'll give you a story told to me by the former Governor of Arkansas about a writing contest in which the instructor said that he would give the highest grade to the student who could write the shortest story containing four fundamental elements of fiction and the four fundamental elements were religion, royalty, sex, and mystery. Religion, royalty, sex, and mystery.

And the story that got the highest grade went something like this. "Oh, God," said the Queen, "I'm pregnant, and I don't know who did it."

**Secretary Napolitano:** So there you go. You all can use that one. You got it for guidance.

First, let me thank Governor Nixon for his introduction. We got a good morning today. Thanks to the members of the National Fusion Center Coordination Group who have worked to bring this conference together and its co-chairs, John Dunn and Rob Reigel, and I want to thank Kansas City for its hospitality for all of us and for all of you.

Why we are here today is about the future of Fusion Centers and let me begin with this fundamental: I believe that Fusion Centers will be the centerpiece of state, local, federal

intelligence-sharing for the future and that the Department of Homeland Security will be working and aiming its programs to underlie Fusion Centers.

I also believe, however, that that means several things beyond just saying it's going to be a centerpiece. First, that we need to be looking at information-sharing in some fundamentally different ways, that it's not just about sharing a fact or a report but that we have the capacity within our Fusion Centers not only to gather information at the local level but to analyze that information and convert what might be seemingly isolated bits of data into a product that can show whether things are happening at a state or local level that implicate greater concerns.

I think to do that requires us at the federal level in our organizational strategy to make clear that Fusion Centers are not just about isolated information-sharing, but they really are about taking information gathered at the state and local level and putting it into an analytical product that can be used at the federal level and that the federal law enforcement agencies are sharing the reverse at the state and local as much as can be done.

And second is that the partnerships involved in Fusion Centers need to be looked at very, very broadly. Who is in your Fusion Center? Do you have representatives from the relevant federal authorities in your locality? Do you have representation from your state, from your local police departments, tribal, if you are in an area of the country that has tribes? In short, are the relevant players all there and co-located in the right way? And are those players undergoing some things that will give them some commonality, training, exercising, things of that sort, so that a building filled with individuals becomes a real active and vibrant center for thinking, analysis, exchange of information?

Third, have we made sure that through the Fusion Centers, we have created kind of seamless network of information-sharing not just vertically state to Fed, local to state to Fed, but also horizontally across the country at different levels, and have we taken into account all that that sharing can entail?

Let us not forget the reason we are here, the reason we have the Department of Homeland Security and the reason we now have Fusion Centers, which is a relatively new concept, is because we did not have the capacity as a country to connect the dots on isolated bits of intelligence prior to 9/11. That's why we started this. Now we know that it's not just the 9/11-type incidents but many, many other types of incidents that we can benefit from having Fusion Centers that share information and product and analysis upwards and horizontally.

As we do that, we need to be clear about a few other things about Fusion Centers and again I go back to my central premise and what I will be advocating as the Secretary of Homeland Security. What I will be advocating as the Secretary of Homeland Security is that Fusion Centers are the centerpiece of state and local information-gathering and sharing for us across the country. Okay? So if that is to be true, then the following must also be recognized.

First, Fusion Centers will not be run by the Federal Government. They will have participation by the Federal Government. You should have grant support by the Federal Government and one thing we will do at the Secretarial level, the departmental level, is look at grant funding to see whether some of that needs to be shifted to recognize the importance of Fusion Centers. But Fusion Centers are primarily a phenomenon of your locality, your local and your state, and they grow from that basis and from that recognition.

Second, Fusion Centers are not the same as your Joint Terrorism Task Forces (JTTF). They are different and they have different roles. The JTTF, as those in the audience know, is an FBI-driven group designed to look solely at the issue of terrorism and terrorism dimension. The Fusion Centers are designed to look at many, many more things beyond that. For example, to give you an example, for some Fusion Centers, a serial kidnapper, a gang or organized crime syndicate in an area, a serial or pattern murderer all have been handled by Fusion Centers. They're not necessarily terrorists. The JTTFs have a very defined specific function, the Fusion Center much broader, and then the Fusion Center also includes capacity for response and recovery. So it becomes a place where, when we think about prevention and planning and consequence management—that you have the right people involved in the Fusion Center to deal with that.

Next, contrary to what I think some have presumed and I think really presumed without talking with anyone who's involved in Fusion Centers, Fusion Centers are not domestic spying agencies and they are not designed to invade the privacy of the American citizen. Know what? We can and we will make sure that we have effective law enforcement in this country while respecting the rights of American citizens and that means the rightest of the rights of American citizens.

So as we design the processes of protocols that we use in our Fusion Center approach, embedded in that will be the value of protecting the rights of the citizens of our country the best, but as we do that, the real benefit of having Fusion Centers is that you take previously unconnected agencies, personnel and the like and you connect them and by doing so give our country the capacity which it did not have prior to 9/11, which is the capacity to connect the dots, and as it connects the dots, hopefully to be able to increase our ability to prevent another such attack on our country or to deal, as I said, more broadly with other sets of crimes in our states and in our regions.

Lastly, let's think about Fusion Centers in a way as a place where we have—the phrase I'll use is “collaborative space.” The opportunity not just to share information across different departments, you know, the city police department with the county sheriff with the local DHS ICE [U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement] person with somebody from the FBI [Federal Bureau of Investigation], not just at that level, but as a place to share information across disparate disciplines, law enforcement, fire, public health, emergency management, critical infrastructure protection, and when you think about it as a place in that collaborative space, then the earlier point I made about the kinds of partners we need to have in there really ties into that because then you need to have partners from all of those sorts of disciplines.

And by the way, let's not forget the private sector when we're looking at those partnerships. They can be a vital part of this as well, and also provide vital support for the sustainability of Fusion Centers as we move forward.

So looking forward and speaking briefly, I think right now, you are at this conference at the exact moment in time you want to be here because now we are taking this concept of Fusion Centers which was pretty much invented in the wake of 9/11. Now we're taking this Department of Homeland Security which we're sure was invented in the wake of 9/11 and we're through our birthing pains and we've seen some things that have worked well, maybe some things that don't, but now I think we can clearly chart our respective futures.

For the Department of Homeland Security is integrated in a fundamental way with state and local and state and local has a fundamental integration with the Department of Homeland Security where we recognize that the key part of that integration is the Fusion Center where we start turning this large ship of institutional and grant-funding and others to recognize that strategy and that reality and where we hold now our Fusion Centers to a higher standard. They're not just about collecting bits of data. They're not just about getting a computer system that interacts with another computer system. They're not just about putting together or sending something off that the recipient saw on CNN earlier that day.

What they really are about is taking data, having the capacity to analyze it, having the training with which to do that analysis, and being able to share it with others who have the similar capacity and so we begin that process of creating that seamless web of security that the people of our country deserve and that they must get. All of us have a role in that. Every single person in this ballroom has a role in helping us create that web and as the Secretary, I tend to spend my time in the Secretaryship, if that is a word, spend our time, my time in that position to facilitate the time that you will spend moving the Fusion Centers along and making them, like I said, the centerpiece of our mutual, of our mutual intelligence future.

Thank you all very much.

**Secretary Napolitano:** Are there any questions? First person who asks a question gets a grant.

**Secretary Napolitano:** How's that? And if you wouldn't mind saying your name and where you're from that would be helpful.

**Question:** Madam Secretary, you're going to think I'm a ringer. I'm one of yours from Homeland Security and, no, ma'am, I don't mean to brag.

**Secretary Napolitano:** Good.

**Question:** Yeah. I may need a job. I'm one of your players --

**Question:** -- and I'm the Director of your National Surveillance Integration Center. The passion for sharing information is great. Your philosophy, please, on the—particularly the information exchange systems and the IT mechanisms, which is one of the biggest hurdles that we have to truly getting through to information-sharing. It's one of the biggest problems that we all face. Your philosophy on that, please.

**Secretary Napolitano:** Well, I don't know if it's a philosophy. I can give you dollars that have been expended and I can tell you, for example, that we have installed the Homeland Secure Data Network in some 29 or so Fusion Centers. That has gotten a good response.

I can tell you that we have provided \$327 million in direct funding to Fusion Centers, another 812 million for broader information-sharing which includes other types of technologies. So I can share with you that kind of nuts and bolts.

But if you want to reduce it to a matter of philosophy, there's—there's a difference to me between merely passing on something and passing on useful information that can be and should be acted upon and that the goal I'm trying to get us to and get you thinking about in this room is whether you've simply been passing on things or whether you've been really thinking through and analyzing data to the point where it's knowledge that should be passed on and acted upon, and that requires more than machinery and more than databases. It really requires something that can never be replaced and that's brainpower assisted by education and training and then we have to have, for those who have that kind of capabilities, we need to make sure we hire them, we train them, we pay them and we keep them, and so looking at the sustainability of the personnel that really have to be the—the fundamentals of these Fusion Centers is going to be key for us.

**Speaker:** We have time for one more question for your schedule.

**Secretary Napolitano:** Oh, I can do more than that.

**Secretary Napolitano:** Yeah?

**Question:** [Ian Hay, SEERN President,] Thank you. I really appreciate you mentioning the private sector. [SEERN], the [SouthEast] Emergency Response Network, was originally a DHS pilot [for] horizontal information-sharing on the regional basis.

Could you describe what you see the role of the private sector in the Fusion Centers moving forward and particularly about co-location because I think that's really critical?

**Secretary Napolitano:** Yeah. I think the role of the private sector actually is like Fusion Centers, and it's an evolving thought, because normally the private sector was not included in—in kind of law enforcement thinking or intelligence thinking, but when we are thinking about the Fusion Center, which has a much larger role in a way than a JTTF, private sector partners are key. They—they can help in terms of sharing of information. They certainly are essential in terms of response and recovery and they need to be prepared and trained and co-located to do that, and then, you know, there's a huge

element of getting to know your private sector partners and, you know, getting to know the people at your local utility that may have been totally disabled by anything from a terrorist attack to an ice storm who need—and what they will need to do and how they will need to do it to get up and running again, getting to know your healthcare providers on the private side who may need to be employed should you be dealing with anything from a biological weapon of mass destruction to—to a pandemic or another type of epidemic-type situation and so part of that is going to require thinking through on an analytical basis, well, who are the private sector partners we really need and who needs to be included within the concept of our fusion?

But a second aspect is educating the private sector about what we are and what we do and by doing that education building a greater public support for Fusion Centers, for their existence, for their sustainability, for their political viability over time, that sort of thing. So it's really two ways.

One is analyzing who in the private sector should be part of the day to day operations of Fusion or at least the regular operation of a Fusion and then beyond that, who should be part of an outreach program into the community at large.

Questions? I can't really see because I got the light shining in my face. Okay. We'll make this the last question.

**Question:** Rich Kelly from New Jersey. Just a quick question. This may be early in your tenure for you to have contemplated it, but there's been a lot of talk with us directors about direct funding of Fusion Centers from DHS. Maybe some money gets detoured along the way. Not to subvert the position of HAS [Homeland Security Adviser] but make sure that the funding gets directly to the Fusion Centers for our sustainability. Have you given that any thought? Could you share that with us?

**Secretary Napolitano:** Right. I'm not surprised you're thinking about direct funding. I would, too, if I were in your shoes. And I haven't given it any thought to the extent of making a decision, but what—I'll tell you what I am looking—what I am looking at within the department.

What I am looking at is what we're doing vis-à-vis information-sharing with state and locals right now, what are we doing with specific subset reference to Fusion Centers, and I'm also looking at what are we doing by grant-awarding and grant guidance to give priority to things that I believe as Secretary we ought to be giving priority to and, of course, I would put Fusion Centers in that category. So that's kind of the analysis I'm going through.

Now, that is not a conclusion about direct funding and not direct funding and there are arguments, I can tell you already, on both sides of that particular issue, but the analysis I'm starting with are the three things that I just detailed for you. Okay?

Listen, everybody. I meant what I said. Fusion Centers to me are going to be key in how we increase our ability to protect the homeland. I think we all recognize that there are no hundred percent guarantees that something untold may happen, despite our best efforts. In that case, Fusion Centers are going to be the key in terms of response, as well.

So how we move forward is going to be a very, very important part of being able to say that we have provided the best homeland security possible for the people of our country. Our mission is a very straightforward one: to protect the American people as best we can with the best talents that we have, and we need to marshal those talents in the best way we can conceive of to be able to achieve that mission.

I will everything I humanly can to assist you in that. I know you will, as well. We are in this together but we are in it at a very, very important time, and I believe we are poised to make very significant progress in the very near future.

Thank you all very much.