

DEPARTMENT OF HOMELAND SECURITY
Office of the Under Secretary for Science & Technology
FY 2008 Report of Closed Meeting of the
Homeland Security Science & Technology Advisory Committee
Under Section 10(d)
Federal Advisory Committee Act

The Homeland Security Science & Technology Advisory Committee (HSSTAC) met in closed session on March 20-21, 2008 in Arlington, VA. The determination to close the meeting was based on the consideration that the briefings and discussions during the meeting would involve classified information sensitive for homeland security. Disclosure of the information discussed could potentially increase the risk to our nation's security due to the identification of vulnerabilities and the potential areas of focus for future research to mitigate our vulnerabilities. All sessions of the meeting were closed to the public pursuant to the provisions of 5 U.S.C. 552b(c).

The objective of this quarterly meeting was to introduce the new organizational and structural changes within the HSSTAC. Three new panels were introduced to focus on the concerns of Under Secretary Cohen: Chemical / Biological (ChemBio) Defense, Cyber Security, and S&T Program Assessment, respectively.

Mr. Norman Polmar, Committee Chairman, opened the meeting by discussing the Under Secretary's response to the Committee's report on Improvised Explosive Devices (IEDs), which had been the focus of their previous committee meetings. He noted that the Under Secretary was generally pleased with their findings, and said that a new IPT for IED Defeat had been established, and that their report had helped to start a number of discussions in this regard. The panel proceeded to discuss their reactions to the report, and the information gathering process in general. Mr. Polmar pointed out that the new structure of three panels would make it much easier to find specific, targeted information in the future. Furthermore, he said, the reports based on each panel's work would help to generate more and better responses as time went on.

Briefings

Dr. Rich Roca, Chairman, Cyber-Security panel, began his briefing by providing an overview of the purpose of the panel, as well as identifying its two primary goals: 1) to help S&T direct its investments, and 2) to help focus DHS cyber operations. Mr. Kapos noted that HSPD 23, the new Cyber-oriented Presidential Directive, set up responsibility for S&T Programs on a national basis, and that it would be important to determine where DHS S&T fit in. Mr. Frank Fernandez, a private consultant and member of the HSSTAC, noted that it was important to understand the roles outlined in HSPD 23 and determine what the threat was. Dr. Steven Bellovin of Columbia University said that it would be useful to apply the same techniques to cyber-security investigations that the Committee had used regarding IEDs. He said it was important to start with a baseline assumption that most networks are vulnerable, and could be disabled.

Dr. Larry Papay, Chairman, S&T Program Assessment Panel, began the discussion by telling the Committee that an S&T Program Assessment had been mandated by Congress, and that their report would serve as a baseline not only for the Under Secretary, but for a new Administration as well. One of the first things that he noted about the organization was that its structural matrix was based on underlying assumptions that their current composition was the best and most relevant format for its needs. One of the primary purposes of the sub-panel would be to verify that. He went on to note that, generally speaking, an organization like S&T was only

as good as its results and would be judged based on them. Mr. Fernandez noted that other organizations model their needs and structural makeup by determining what challenge areas they had that could not be addressed by anyone else, and adjust so that they could accommodate them. He recommended that S&T follow this approach, but noted that it would be difficult to implement in a strategic manner.

Dr. Dave Franz, Chairman, Chem/Bio Defense Panel, began his discussion by noting that his sub-panel's report would be due earlier than those of the other two panels. He said that the intent of the Chem/Bio panel's work was to understand the key players in the community and establish a baseline for the threat. He said that their primary interaction would be with the Basic Research, Chem/Bio, and Health Affairs divisions of DHS, as well as relevant Federal agencies such as Health and Human Services. He further noted that HSPD 10 required a risk assessment every three years in this regard, and that they would likely have to reach beyond S&T in order to accomplish such a goal.

Mr. Rich Kikla, Acting Director of the Transition portfolio, began his briefing by noting that Transition held 50 percent of the budget given to the three portfolio leads. He went on to provide an overview of the 12 IPTs, and said that they were all progressing well with the exception of the Cyber-Security and Interoperability IPTs. He explained that a Technology Oversight Group, which was chaired by the Deputy Secretary of DHS, ensures the strategic balance of the IPTs.

Mr. Dave Masters, Deputy Director of the Innovation portfolio, began his presentation by providing the panel with a brief description of S&T's Innovation portfolio, as well as some of the distinguishing characteristics that differentiated it from the Transition and Research portfolios. He noted that Innovation was more flexible and technology oriented than the other two offices. He further explained that Innovation is characterized by focusing on technologies that do not normally go through the basic research vetting process, which he said led to higher returns on a product solution, as well as higher risk. Furthermore, he noted that their products could be put onto the market much more quickly in some cases.

Mr. Rolf Dietrich, Deputy Director of the Research portfolio, provided a program overview of the Basic Research portfolio to the members of the Committee, and he opened by describing its organization within S&T and its relationship with the customer. He said that it was customer-focused and output-oriented, and that their goal was to have a long-term positive effect on their customers based on strategic needs.

The briefings concluded the meeting. The next meeting of the HSSTAC will be on July 15-17, 2008 in Washington, DC.



Ervin Kapos
Designated Federal Officer