

Department of Homeland Security: Office *for* State and Local Law Enforcement

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I am often asked, “Are we safer today than we were on the morning of September 11, 2001?” Although challenges persist, our nation is stronger, safer, and more resilient than ever before.

Over the past decade, America has become more secure and more capable of dealing with the threat of terrorism. We have developed a strong security framework to protect our country from large-scale attacks directed from abroad, while enhancing Federal, state, and local capabilities to prepare for, respond to, and recover from attacks and disasters at home. As part of this security framework, we have worked with our partners at every level to increase our ability to analyze and share threat information.

As partners with the nonfederal law enforcement community, we have done a lot over the past decade to ensure the safety, security, and resilience of our nation. While the United States has made significant progress, threats from terrorists persist and continually evolve. The challenges we face today are not the same as the threats of a decade ago. Today, we face a threat environment where violent extremism is not defined or contained by international borders and could originate at home, as well as abroad.

This reality has changed the way we think about terrorism prevention and means that state, local, and tribal law enforcement may often be in the best position to identify and uncover the first signs of criminal and terrorist activity.

Homeland security begins with hometown security and that is why, since its inception, DHS has worked to build a homeland security architecture that engages all of partners in this shared responsibility.

To ensure the coordination of DHS-wide policies relating to nonfederal law enforcement's role in preventing acts of terrorism, Congress created the Office for State and Local Law Enforcement (OSLLE) in 2007. [1]

In July 2011, after a 36-year career in law enforcement and a brief period in the private sector, I had the honor of being asked to serve as the Assistant Secretary for DHS OSSLE. Having previously served as Assistant Director of the Federal Bureau of Investigation's Office of Law Enforcement Coordination from 2002 to 2008, I was honored to have the opportunity to once again serve our great country and the law enforcement community.

To effectively serve as the law enforcement community's liaison to DHS, the OSLLE team works every day with other DHS Components to get information out of Washington, D.C. and into the hands of our nonfederal law enforcement partners. Through the OSLLE, our state, local, and tribal partners are kept informed about important Department-wide initiatives such as "If You See Something, Say Something™", the Blue Campaign, the Nationwide Suspicious Activity Reporting (SAR) Initiative (NSI), and the Department's efforts in Countering Violent Extremism. Whether we are expanding the distribution of timely and actionable information related to operations and intelligence or educating state, local, and tribal law enforcement on the programs and initiatives of DHS, we are tirelessly working on behalf of our partners to keep them up-to-date and informed with the information they need to keep our homeland safe.

Within DHS, the OSLLE also serves as the advocate and voice for the nonfederal law enforcement community. We are responsible for ensuring that DHS leadership is aware of and considers the issues, concerns, and requirements of state, local, and tribal law enforcement during budget, grant, and policy development processes. As I stated in my oral testimony to the Committee on Homeland Security, Subcommittee on Counterterrorism and Intelligence in February 2012, I believe this was the intention of Congress when it created and named my office, the Office *for* State and Local Law Enforcement.

In addition to sharing information, my office is committed to proactively identifying and responding to the challenges facing the law enforcement community. For example, we are working with other DHS Components to help educate and include state, local, and tribal law

enforcement in the development and construction of the newly-create Nationwide Public Safety Broadband Network [2].

The OSLE is also committed to finding ways for our law enforcement partners to manage the current economic environment. As a former police chief, I know firsthand that training is usually the first casualty of tighter budgets. To assist our partners in identifying options to meet their current and future training requirements, we arranged for the leadership of the major law enforcement associations, including the FBI LEEDA, to visit and tour the DHS Federal Law Enforcement Training Centers (FLETC) in Glynco, Georgia this past May. In August, we also arranged for a smaller contingent of association leaders to visit and tour the U.S. Secret Service's National Computer Forensics Institute in Hoover, Alabama.

Collaboration with our law enforcement partners is important to DHS's efforts to improve information sharing and enhance our nation's ability to identify, mitigate, and respond to emerging threats. I believe that we have made significant progress over the past year, and we are now in a better position than ever before to accomplish our mission.

As the OSLE grows and evolves, we will continue our proactive outreach efforts by attending important law enforcement gatherings, training conferences, and meetings to stay abreast of the issues and concerns of the law enforcement community.

We look forward to continuing our great relationship with FBI LEEDA as we strive to keep our nation safe, secure, and resilient.

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Notes:

[1] Implementing Recommendations of the 9/11 Commission Act of 2007, Pub.L. 110-53.

[2] For more information on these or other DHS programs and initiatives, please contact the OSLE at 202-282-9545.