



One Hundred Tenth Congress
U.S. House of Representatives
Committee on Homeland Security
Washington, DC 20515

August 9, 2007

The Honorable Michael Chertoff
Secretary
Department of Homeland Security
Washington, DC 20528

The Honorable Michael Chertoff:

I recently became aware of an issue within the Terrorist Screening Center (TSC) that deserves your immediate attention. Homeland Security Presidential Directive-11 (HSPD-11) tasks you with implementing a coordinated and comprehensive approach to screening terrorists. TSC is charged with maintaining the Federal Government's terrorist watch list, otherwise known as the Terrorist Screening Database (TSDB). The TSDB contains the names of people from around the globe who are known or suspected to be involved with terrorist activities. The watch list is used to help guide the actions of a number of Department of Homeland Security (DHS) entities, including the Customs and Border Protection (CBP) and the Transportation Security Administration (TSA), as well as other agencies such as the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI).

If used effectively, the TSDB provides a valuable tool to federal law enforcement officials and others tasked with defending the United States from attack. I am concerned, however, with the accuracy and maintenance of the information on the TSDB, as well as how the watch list is being used. I request that you provide answers to the following questions regarding the management and use of the TSDB.

1. How does TSC maintain the TSDB to ensure the information therein is as accurate as possible?
2. What resources are being utilized to ensure that information on the watch list is accurate?
3. What government and non-government entities currently use the TSDB?
4. What partnerships or agreements have DHS or TSC entered into to manage the use of the TSDB?
5. Have any Federal departments or agencies been unwilling or unable to cooperate with any requests of DHS or TSC regarding the use of the TSDB?

August 9, 2007

Page 2

- Please provide a list of any departments or agencies unable or unwilling to fully cooperate with DHS or TSC.
 - Please provide an explanation of why any such departments or agencies have been unable or unwilling to cooperate.
6. What resources are available to assure that the list is updated to reflect name changes, deaths, and similar occurrences?

The Federal Government has spent valuable resources compiling these records, and must therefore ensure that the information is accurate, up-to-date, and used in an effective manner. In doing so, the Department, in accordance with HSPD-11, should institute measures to mitigate vulnerabilities and protect the civil rights and civil liberties of the nation's citizens.

Pursuant to Rule X (3)(g) and Rule XI of the Rules of the House of Representatives, I request a response in writing not later than August 23, 2007. Should you have any questions, please contact Matt Washington, Subcommittee Director, Committee on Homeland Security, at (202) 226-2616.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Bennie Thompson". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, stylized "B" and "T".

Bennie Thompson
Chairman

cc: Leonard C. Boyle, Director, Terrorist Screening Center
Michael J. Astrue, Commissioner, Social Security Administration

BGT/mw