Fusion Centers

Your Name (First M. Last)

School or Institution Name (University at Place or Town, State)

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**Introduction**

A fusion center is a dissemination and information gathering state or an urban area owned by a state, territorial or local enforcement to combat terrorism and criminal activities. The U.S. Department of Homeland Security (DHS) and the U.S. Department of Justice established several fusion centers from 2003 to 2007. The essential purpose of fusion centers was aimed at promoting information sharing at the federal level between agencies like DHS, the U.S. Department of Justice, local and state law enforcement. As of recent statistics, there existed 79 active fusion centers under the supervision of DHS. It is imperative to critically assess the need, role and implication of fusion centers. To discuss their history, the network was established after the terrible terrorist attack of September 11 to offer a significant collaboration among sectors and jurisdictions to profoundly administer, investigate prevent and detect terrorist and criminal activity (“Advancing the Homeland Security Information Sharing Environment: A Review of the National Network of Fusion Centers,” n.d.). It is a distributed and decentralized national asset comprising pivotal urban and state fusion centers and their subsequent nodes within distinct places. The fundamental composition is a potential source to enable the network to meet needs while dispensing information to comprehend the national landscape of criminal activity and threats.

**History of Fusion Centers**

The concept of inception of fusion centers lied at the very heart of curbing the persistently changing and altering state of threats. National Strategy for Information Sharing and the National Strategy for Information Sharing and Safeguarding were the two dominant documents which influenced the operational mechanism of fusion networks and further underpinned a critical strategy for enhanced information sharing. The NFCA, local and federal law enforcement associations conceived the baseline strategy and stipulated goals that ought to be achieved by the fusion network centers. However, the national strategy is persistently being changed and reformed with the passage of time to meet the metrics of national security. In addition, a Cyber Appendix was incorporated into the baseline document to further illustrate and clear the operational prerogative and roles of fusion centers to confront cybercrime falling in their radar.

**Responsibilities of fusion Centers in Combating Violent Terrorism**

Serving as analytic hubs, fusion centers are precisely situated to strengthen frontline personnel to comprehend the local ramifications of national intelligence. It pursues the structure by tailoring sensitive information into a local framework and assisting frontline personnel to understand criminal and terrorist activities encountered in the field. A keen analysis of the structure execution and responsibilities of fusion centers is imperative. For instance, they integrate information acquired through local law enforcement into analytic efforts to establish enhanced, actionable and relatable products. Besides, they leverage programs to facilitate the exchange of sensitive information between stakeholders and fusion centers. The representatives of Fusion Liaison Officer (FLO) illustrate a strategic approach to strengthen the partnership between local community policing efforts and fusion centers (Klem, 2017). The cornerstone to combat terrorist and criminal activities is establishing grassroots analytic and intelligence competencies within the local and state environment. Consequently, both local and state partners can advance to prioritize resources and curb the existing menaces. The United State of America is a nation faced an evolving environment of threat where the threat is generated from not only outside but also from the inside communities. The fusion centers play an instrumental role, as discussed, to combat terrorism and criminal activities by offering local and state partners with relevant, accurate and timely threat analysis.

**Controversies Surrounding Fusion Centers**

A wide range of critiques has raised concerns regarding the effectiveness of fusion centers in protecting the nation from both outside and homegrown perils and their technique to the critical phenomenon of intelligence sharing. There exist 78 fusion centers comprising small to massive centers with more than 250 agents, officers and analysts. The most prominent shortcoming indicated by cynics is the lack of oversight with civil privacy and liberty. The fusion centers often possess an ambiguous chain of command and lines of authority, the inclusion of private-sector data brokers, excessive secrecy about operations and questionable information mining tactics. A research study published by a professor of the University of North Carolina revealed the manner wherein fusion centers shared sensitive information with private sector data brokers. For instance, the centers are devoid of integrating a systematic execution of accountability or oversight despite private organizations acquiring unprecedented access to government and individual’s data.

Moreover, it is imperative to underpin the inconsistent nature of funding received by fusion centers. Federal grant on local and state homeland security has been witnessing a drastic decline since 2010 as per Federal Funds for States. Each state or local police officer in fusion centers snatches a cop from the force. When these centers are occupied by doze of officers, the number accelerates rapidly. The lack of grant from the federal government causes several fusion centers to remain ineffective and face the peril of closing. Irrefutably, setting an information sharing network is a daunting task and seeks potential contribution from all law enforcement agencies comprising three branches of government, making it four with the inclusion of tribal. In spite of these adversities, researchers who have a keen insight on intelligence programs are often cautiously optimistic about the operations of fusion centers. However, the major question is whether or not these centers manage to secure the stat against the ever-evolving threat of terrorism from internal and external threats.

**Success Stories**

Fusion centers have successfully advanced their role in serving their mission in true letter and spirits. In 2010, fusion centers throughout the state shared leads and information with the federal government pertaining to Faisal Shahzad who attempted bombing of Times Square. In 2013, the Immigration and Customs Enforcement Officer brought in the Central Florida Intelligence Exchange on a case comprising an individual wanted for involvement in child pornography. The exchange informed the fusion center in Tennessee and Information Sharing and Analysis Center in Georgia. Consequently, it resulted in the arrest of the criminal in a quick succession. Besides, Alaska State Troopers conveyed the Alaska Information and Analysis Center (AKIAC) about a fugitive wanted for several felony charges who had departed the state. He analyst of the fusion center recognized that the criminal had departed on a commercial flight en route to Memphis from Minneapolis. AKIAC coordinated with the fusion center and the subject was apprehended at the Memphis International Airport police department. A police officer reported to the Southwest Texas Fusion Center about an individual having ties with a hate group located in Minnesota. The assistance of Minnesota Fusion Center offered an enhanced coordination with San Antonio’s FBI Joint Terrorism Task Force (JTTD). Later the FBI issued the search warrant which unraveled suspected pipe bombs and firearms, Molotov cocktails and finally lead to the apprehension of the individual.

The mentioned cases highlight the importance of fusion centers to ensure profound collaboration within institutions and advance toward the accomplishment of their mission. The sharing of information from the state to federal agencies, vertical, has proved productive. The instances reveal a lateral move can have equal if not an enhanced value and greater outcome.

References

Advancing the Homeland Security Information Sharing Environment: A Review of the National Network of Fusion Centers. (n.d.). Retrieved June 15, 2019, from https://www.hsdl.org/?abstract&did=805450

Klem, N. (2017). *Elements Impacting the Integration of the National Network of Fusion Centers with the U.S. National Security Strategy*.