

Senate Select Committee on Intelligence
Tuesday, October 1, 2002
10:00 a.m.
Senate Hart Office Building

Remarks from Baltimore Police Commissioner Edward T. Norris

Good Morning ladies and gentlemen, I'm honored that you have invited me here to speak with you today. I'm proud to represent the Baltimore Police Department, and I hope the information discussed today leads to better intelligence sharing between local and federal agencies. Unfortunately in the past year it has not improved to an acceptable level.

In October of 2001 Baltimore Mayor Martin O'Malley and I testified before the House Committee on Government Reform on this very issue of information sharing. We pointed out that the FBI had less than 12,000 agents at the time, while local law enforcement had nearly 650,000 officers. We stressed that police officers, not federal agents, were in touch with millions of people everyday and we needed to know what the FBI knows about threats, tips, or even just rumors about terrorism. One year later the situation is much the same.

Today I am prepared to share with you several examples of suspicious activity that has taken place in Baltimore. In most of these cases my officers uncovered the information which led to these investigations, and in almost every one of these cases a federal agency did little if anything to work with the Baltimore Police Department. In one particular case a member of the Federal Bureau of Investigation told me they were not investigating a particular suspect. However, after my detectives continued to

research this person, the FBI contacted us to ask why a computer had alerted them that our agency was still looking into this suspect? Despite what I had been told, there was an ongoing investigation on this person.

One of the questions I was asked to discuss today is 'what are the impediments to intelligence sharing among local, state, and federal agencies'? The answer is simple; the federal government is that impediment. Information from federal agencies is still fragmented and inconsistent. When the federal alert status was raised on September 11, 2002 I heard of it the same way the rest of the country did, on television. In the past year I have asked the FBI several times for a full briefing on all Baltimore based investigations involving international/national terrorism; that meeting has never happened. Why have you heard so little about this huge information gap between local and federal law enforcement? Unfortunately, some of the blame must fall on police chiefs throughout the country who privately complain that they have no idea what the feds may be working on in their area...but for reasons known only to them they have decided not to speak out.

In closing, I want to remind you that this new war on terrorism will be most effectively fought through the oldest law enforcement strategy there is, human intelligence. In the end, people deliver bombs, bio-warfare, and bullets...and they are sharing their plans with others. Shouldn't we be doing the same?

The Baltimore office of the FBI has close to 60 agents to cover this city. The INS has 20 special agents assigned here in Baltimore. I have 3200 sworn officers, and more than 500 civilians policing this city. Both the math, and the logic, is staggering.