

Statement of

The Honorable Orrin Hatch

United States Senator
Utah
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Statement of Chairman Orrin G. Hatch
Before the United States Senate Judiciary Committee

Hearing on

"FBI Oversight: Terrorism and Other Topics"

Today we will conduct an oversight hearing on the FBI's efforts to combat terrorism as well as other issues. I would like to welcome FBI Director Robert Mueller, who will testify before us today. I enjoyed our meeting earlier this month, which I thought was very productive.

As many of you know, Director Mueller started his job one week prior to 9/11. At the time, although the FBI was the subject of intense criticism and media coverage, Director Mueller was undaunted and took the job head on. Over the last three years, he has accepted the challenge of transforming the FBI and has made every effort to help usher the FBI into the 21st Century. The challenges that he has undertaken are ambitious and, of course, cannot be completed overnight.

In an agency that has 56 field offices, over 400 satellite offices, 52 overseas offices and employs over 28,000 people, it is impossible to know what is going on in every place at every moment. Yet Director Mueller has made it his business to find out where the trouble spots are and to take every measure to resolve problems, investigate any misconduct, and to seek outside expertise, when necessary to assess or address the issue.

One of the many aspects of Director Mueller's performance that I continue to be most impressed by is how responsive he has been to Congressional concerns. Let me give you one example. I know my friend and colleague from Vermont is diligent in making sure that witnesses that have appeared before the Judiciary Committee on prior occasions have answered their written questions. As I am sure Senator Leahy appreciates, Director Mueller has made sure that every written question posed to the FBI at the last oversight hearing was answered.

The FBI's number one priority since 9/11 has been to protect the American people from another terrorist attack. In the subsequent two years and eight months, the FBI has succeeded in that goal. Since September 11, 2001, more than 3,000 Al Qaeda leaders and foot soldiers have been taken into custody around the globe; nearly 200 suspected terrorist associates have been charged with crimes in the United States, and as many as a hundred terrorist attacks or plots have been broken up worldwide.

As we all know, before September 2001, we had communications challenges between the law enforcement community and the intelligence community. Sections 203 and 218 of the USA PATRIOT Act--which are due to expire on December 31, 2005--have been instrumental in breaking down the artificial wall of non-communication between the intelligence community and the law enforcement community. We will never forget the joyous occasion of the fall of the Berlin Wall on November 9, 1989. Anytime walls come down allowing for growth and greater achievement, it is momentous. The wall that came crumbling down with the passage of the USA PATRIOT Act has great significance for those in the law enforcement and intelligence communities. By facilitating and encouraging increased communication among federal agencies, the USA PATRIOT Act has paved the way for many of the coordination initiatives that Director Mueller has undertaken.

Perhaps the greatest consequence of the tearing down of the wall is that it has set the stage for a new culture of cooperation within the government. Before 9/11, federal, state and local agencies tended to operate individually. They were territorial, wanting to preserve their own jurisdiction, and not used to sharing information and resources. I think 9/11 was a wake up call for all of us. It became clear that we needed to establish task forces to coordinate information and work cooperatively to share intelligence and law enforcement leads in order to effectively fight this war on terror.

It takes time to change long-held cultural mores, and to ensure that everyone is sharing information when they should, but Director Mueller has taken several key steps in the right direction. Today, the FBI and the CIA are integrated at virtually every level of operations. Under Director Mueller's leadership, the FBI created the National Joint Terrorism Task Force, which works with the FBI's newly created Office of Intelligence to coordinate inter-agency intelligence-gathering activities and to act as a liaison between FBI Headquarters and local JTTFs.

At the direction of the President, the FBI is leading the effort on the Terrorist Screening Center, which became operational last December. The FBI is also involved in the Terrorist Threat Integration Center, which was established last May at the direction of President Bush. It coordinates strategic analyses of threats based upon intelligence from various agencies and operates out of Langley, Virginia.

In addition to all this, the FBI sends out weekly intelligence bulletins to over 1700 law enforcement agencies and 60 federal agencies. I am looking forward to hearing more about these areas during this hearing.

These impressive accomplishments notwithstanding, the FBI does face some challenges. Let me start by commending Director Mueller for taking on the Herculean task of modernizing the information technology systems at the FBI, a project which we all know of as Trilogy. It is not an easy task to update both local and wide area networks and install 30,000 new desktop computers, but you have accomplished that and I congratulate you.

I understand that you have been consulting with various outside experts seeking their advice on the Trilogy project and have received much praise for working cooperatively with them and being receptive to their recommendations. For example, I know that you actively sought out the expert advice of the National Research Council of the National Academies. Their initial report, which was released last week, made some important observations, and a subsequent updated report will be forthcoming. I was particularly impressed that some of the recommendations that they made in the initial report had already been implemented by the FBI before the report was released.

I know that you still have a very long way to go on this project and that you are still working with various experts on the Virtual Case File system as well as other aspects of Trilogy. I have every confidence that you will continue to be responsive and will do whatever it takes to get an effective IT system up and running.

On another note, I know that the FBI, like most federal agencies, is facing the challenge of finding qualified linguists. While the demand for linguists in various dialects of Arabic, Farsi, Pashto, Urdu and other Asian or Middle Eastern languages continue to be in high demand, I am heartened to hear that the FBI has added nearly 700 translators since September 2001. I am reassured that the FBI has exacting standards, that 65% of its applicants are screened out by a series of qualification tests, and that the FBI has quality control measures in place to ensure that translations are accurate and complete.

Although I recognize that the FBI needs to hire more translators to meet their growing demand, I appreciate that you have adopted an aggressive recruitment strategy, advertising in both foreign language and mainstream media, and targeting foreign language departments in American universities, military outplacement posts, and local ethnic communities. I also appreciate that you have prioritized tasks so that the most significant counterterrorism or counterintelligence assignments are done first, often within 12 hours. I look forward to hearing more on this issue.

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