

Terrorist Threat Integration Center: A Case Study in Successful Interagency Interaction

The Terrorist Threat Integration Center (TTIC) was mandated by President Bush in his 2003 State of the Union Address. On January 28, 2003 he announced that he had instructed the Director of Central Intelligence (DCI), the Director of the FBI (working with the Attorney General), and the Secretaries of Homeland Security and Defense to create the TTIC. This organization would be responsible for merging and analyzing terrorist-related information collected domestically and abroad in order to form the most comprehensive threat assessment possible.¹

The genesis of this center stems directly from the perceived intelligence failures of the FBI and CIA before the September 11th attacks, when they were unable to “close the seams” and share information with each other. The center was officially stood up on May 1, 2003 and John Brennan became its first director. Currently, the organization is located on the campus of the CIA but is due to move to its own independent location in the summer of 2004. The TTIC has analysts from a multitude of different agencies that work together in the center. They have connectivity into 14 agencies, with 10 more planned in the near future. TTIC provides an intelligence report directly to the President daily.²

The key objective for the center is to develop an integrated information technology architecture so that analytic tools and federated search capabilities can be applied to the huge amount of data collected by the Federal Government. TTIC views itself as a “joint venture” among many of the federal agencies. The analysts from these different agencies sit “side-by-side, sharing information and connecting the scattered pieces of the terrorism puzzle” according to the testimony of John Brennan during the 9-11 Commission hearings. The following agencies have permanent delegates to the TTIC:

- FBI
- CIA (incl. NSA and NRO)
- DOS
- DOD
- DHS
- DOE
- NRC
- Capitol Police

The new location that they will move to in the summer of 2004 will be co-located with the CIA’s Counterterrorism Center and the FBI’s Counterterrorism Division. This may either be helpful or may create even more rivalries. TTIC has experienced some antipathy from both of these centers, especially the CIA’s CTC, due mostly to slightly

¹ Remaining work needs to be done to establish the exact chain of command for TTIC.

² Organizational details come from National Public Radio, *Morning Edition*, “Profile: Terrorist Threat Integration Center now in charge of terrorism analysis,” April 29, 2004.

overlapping mandates. These internecine rivalries could cause some problems in the future, but it is likely that as everyone's job becomes clearer and overlaps are eliminated, the competition will die out.

TTIC has had successes in its integration of terrorist threat information in its first year. Of course, due to the classified nature of its work, not all of these successes are known or verifiable. However, a few are. Information received and analyzed by TTIC has triggered a terrorist threat alert that caused the national threat condition to be upgraded to "orange" on December 20, 2003. TTIC has given a significant amount of information to foreign intelligence services—specifically Israel—as well as other countries in Europe, the Middle East and Southeast Asia, that have helped to prevent terrorist attacks overseas. Finally, TTIC has been pivotal in preventing several terrorist attacks on airlines, specifically on some flights destined for the United States.³

Thus, it seems that TTIC overall is a successful example of interagency cooperation. It is successful because it has strong presidential and senior leadership backing; it is oriented around a specific task and the participants in the center are co-located. Funding for the center is strong as well.

There are potential problems, however: connectivity between the different involved agencies continues to be a problem—Director Brennan currently has 6 different computers on his desk, because the six intelligence agencies do not have systems that can talk with each other. As mentioned earlier, rivalries could also cause a breakdown. Clear mandates and goals will be important so that work is not overlapping and every agency will understand what the center's role will be and what their role should be.

³ For more information on the threats that have been averted, see John Brennan's statement in front of the 9/11 Commission, http://www.9-11commission.gov/hearings/hearing10/brennan_statement.pdf