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Pegasus Testifies Before House Homeland Security Subcommittee

On Wednesday, July 20, the House Homeland Security Subcommittee on Intelligence, Information Sharing, and Terrorism Risk Assessment held a hearing on information sharing initiatives important to the Nation's Homeland Security. The hearing was chaired by Congressman Rob Simmons (R-CT), with Subcommittee Ranking Member Zoe Lofgren (D-CA), House Homeland Security Committee Chairman Christopher Cox, House Homeland Security Committee Ranking Member Bennie G. Thompson (D-MS) and a number of other Members in attendance.

The hearing, entitled "A Progress Report on Information Sharing for Homeland Security", was held to examine the Department of Homeland Security's ability to coordinate intelligence with State, local, and tribal governments and law enforcement organizations and identify improvements that DHS can make to expand its national information sharing capabilities.

In addition to Dr. Lee Colwell, Executive Director, Pegasus Research Foundation, representatives of State and Tribal law enforcement and DHS testified at the hearing.

In his testimony, Dr. Colwell spoke about the important homeland security and law enforcement role of Local-To-Local (or L2L) law enforcement data communications, especially for local law enforcement in rural areas.

Dr. Colwell emphasized the key role Congress has played and continues to play in assuring that the information sharing needs of local law enforcement are met, especially in rural areas, noting that:

"The Pegasus program is Congressionally-led. Pegasus is locally managed as a nationwide initiative for highly-secure nationwide L2L legacy data exchange of local law enforcement and homeland security data. As far as we know, the Congressionally initiated Pegasus program is the only nationwide program with a strategy and plan for nationwide implementation.

"Pegasus is a good example of how Congress provided for previously unmet local agency needs to solve an essentially Federal problem by engaging thousands of local front line law enforcement personnel in the solution. ...

"With continued support, Pegasus provides a basic tool that serves local agency needs for L2L law enforcement data communications. This is especially critical to those small and rural agencies where the need is the greatest because they have limited or few financial and information technology resources and little or no access to local agency data from other areas."

Dr. Colwell also described Pegasus technology in the context of a proposed working relationship under discussion with DHS Homeland Security Information Network (HSIN):

"Built around secure encrypted Internet transport and the Department of Justice Global Justice XML Data Model and other Federal standards wherever possible, Pegasus uses commercial off-the-shelf (COTS) technology. ...

“Pegasus is a highly cost-effective vehicle for regional information sharing projects, especially for local agencies in small towns and rural areas that do not have the financial and information technology resources to build technology-intensive data sharing capabilities.

“Pegasus does not compete with or duplicate existing databases or vendors, but rather works with existing software and hardware resident in the agency.”

Other panelists generally concurred that the Nation had made significant progress in information sharing since 9/11, but “we are still not where we should be or must be if we are going to be effective in protecting our communities from future attack.”

About the Pegasus Program

The Pegasus Program is a non-federal multi-state immediate information sharing program designed by and for local law enforcement and first responders utilizing COTS technology. It is operated with US Department of Justice approved NIST standards by the Pegasus Research Foundation in coordination with the National Sheriffs' Association (NSA). Information on the Pegasus Program may be found at www.pegasusresearch.org.

About Pegasus Research Foundation

The Pegasus Research Foundation ("PRF") is a non-profit corporation created to work in coordination with the Nation's Sheriffs, municipal police, fire departments, first responder, public health and critical infrastructure entities, to facilitate multi-state sharing of essential law enforcement and Homeland Security information. PRF's Executive Director is Dr. Lee Colwell, former Associate Director of the FBI, and a nationally recognized leader in local, State and federal law enforcement policy development and implementation. Information on PRF may be found at www.pegasusresearch.org.

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