

## Federal Computer Week

### IG: Fusion centers need better information from DHS

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The Homeland Security Department is improving how it delivers information to state and local fusion centers, but the centers still have problems in receiving “adequate and timely” information, according to a new report from DHS Inspector General Richard Skinner.

The report posted on the Web on Jan. 6 provides details on how the department supports and offers guidance to 58 intelligence fusion centers that combine efforts to fight crime and provide intelligence on counterterrorism.

As of April 2008, DHS’ Office of Intelligence and Analysis had deployed 23 intelligence officers to the centers. The department also had provided \$254 million to the centers from fiscal 2004 through fiscal 2007.

The department’s coordination efforts with fusion centers are improving, evolving and adding value to the centers, the inspector general said. “However, challenges remain with internal Department of Homeland Security coordination, aligning fusion-center activities and funding with the department’s mission, and deploying personnel to state and local fusion centers in a timely manner,” the report said.

Also, the centers continue to report problems in getting useful information from the department, Skinner wrote.

“Fusion-center officials remain concerned that Intelligence and Analysis has not developed an action plan to ensure that it understands and can meet the centers’ evolving and unique needs. Such needs include receiving adequate and timely information from DHS, assistance in navigating DHS’ complex organization, and obtaining initial and ongoing training for state and local analysts,” the report said.

Many state and local officials complained that in the past, they received irrelevant and outdated information from the department. DHS is working to correct that situation and conducted a pilot program with several centers to improve its response to requests for information, the report said.

That program identified several areas that need improvement, including establishing a single point of entry to submit requests for information, improving response time and training fusion-center personnel on how to access information. While this was helpful, some problems remain, the IG concluded.

The IG made seven recommendations for improvement, and DHS officials agreed with the recommendations.