

THE WHITE HOUSE

WASHINGTON

October 21, 2005

Dear Ms. Baird:

Thank you for your thoughtful letter of September 7, 2005, in which you shared with the President insights and suggestions of the Markle Task Force as he prepares to issue guidelines and requirements pursuant to section 1016(d) of the Intelligence Reform and Terrorism Prevention Act of 2004 (IRTPA).

As you likely have heard by now, the priority response to Hurricane Katrina by many of the key information-sharing stakeholders temporarily delayed our efforts to meet the IRTPA's September 13 deliverable. We are now back on track, and expect the President to issue a directive shortly.

On behalf of the President, we are deeply grateful to you and the entire Markle Task Force for your abiding commitment to improving the U.S. Government's capacity to facilitate access to and sharing of terrorism information. We also share your sense of urgency about establishing an Information Sharing Environment (ISE) that will facilitate the flow of terrorism-related information within and beyond the Federal Government without infringing on information privacy rights or civil liberties.

As for your specific suggestions, please rest assured the Director of National Intelligence (DNI) fully appreciates his responsibility with respect to creating the ISE, and will ensure the Program Manager -- who is subject to the DNI's authority, direction and control -- receives the support he needs. In addition, the President's guidelines will be designed to set Government-wide policies and procedures, and will address conflicting authorities between and among agencies in the information-sharing context.

We appreciate your concern about the need to address Originator Controls (ORCON) and U.S. person data, among others, in the ISE context. Guidance on these matters will be forthcoming. The Privacy and Civil Liberties Oversight Board -- once its chair and vice chair are confirmed and it becomes operational --

promises to provide a valuable resource for the Program Manager, the Information Sharing Council, and participating departments and agencies in both the development and use of the ISE.

We have no plan to designate the Program Manager as chair of the Information Sharing Policy Coordination Committee (ISPCC). The ISPCC, like other PCC's, is a White House-based forum that neutrally addresses policy issues and disputes which, in this case, relate to terrorism information sharing and building the ISE. The Program Manager, who himself is a member of that body separate and apart from the O/DNI representative, is expected to raise issues and advocate positions before the ISPCC.

Thank you, again, for your ongoing commitment to this critical initiative and for your generous offer of further assistance. An identical letter has been sent to Mr. Barksdale.

Sincerely,



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