

**Ranking Member Kathleen Rice Statement**  
**Counterterrorism and Intelligence Subcommittee**

**“Sixteen Years After 9/11: Assessing Suspicious Activity Reporting Efforts”**

**September 13, 2017**

As we gather here today, I would be remised if I did not acknowledge this important week in history. Sixteen years ago this week, terrorists forever changed how we live. In the years since that have passed since 9/11, our government has worked to become more centralized and connected, in order to prevent and respond to terrorism.

Today, I look forward to a robust dialogue on the evolution and the current state of suspicious activity reporting, informally known as SARs. Our SAR programs were established to help facilitate the process of sharing terrorism-related suspicious activity reporting with state and local law enforcement.

Concurrently, SARs require education and training requires finding the right balance of privacy and security by protecting the civil rights and civil liberties of all US persons. Suspicious activity reporting efforts, including the Department of Homeland Security’s “If You See Something, Say Something” campaign and the Nationwide Suspicious Activity Reporting Initiative help to raise public awareness and are necessary tools to detect, deter, and combat terrorism in the homeland.

The success of each of these programs requires continuous promotion and active participation by all of our homeland security partners.

That list includes law enforcement at all levels such as our educators, spiritual leaders, neighbors, and our nationwide community as a whole. Unfortunately, within next year’s budget for NSI, funding for SARs is said to be approximately \$400,000, which is a decrease from an approximate \$2 million annual budget at creation in 2007.

The level of U.S. funding, resources, and personnel dedicated to SAR efforts must continue, in order to limit the risk that terrorism poses to U.S. interests at home and abroad. As new, emerging and evolving threats continue to test our resolve, we must also continue relying on the public to play an integral role by notifying law enforcement when someone or somethings presents a danger.

We must also acknowledge that many civil liberties and privacy advocates have expressed discontent with SARs over the years, as some reporting has been improperly used to help fuel fear and paranoia. Consequently, some advocates have expressed a need for greater measures of accountability over law enforcement activity to be applied, which I support.

I sincerely hope that with this hearing, we can gain a better understanding of all of the resources necessary for us to continue protecting the homeland through suspicious activity reporting. We must remain vigilant. We must continue to work together and implement strong security measures and guidelines to continue quality real-time information sharing environments.

Our Committee welcomes the opportunity to engage in that process, and I look forward to hearing our witnesses’ priorities and recommendations as we look to the future of our information sharing and counterterrorism efforts.