

Prepared Testimony of Chief Daniel J. Oates, Aurora Police Department

**Before the House of Representatives' Homeland Security Committee's
Subcommittee on Intelligence, Information Sharing, and Terrorism Risk
Assessment**

August 10, 2007, Aurora Municipal Center, Aurora Colorado

Members of Congress:

Thank you for this opportunity to testify today and to represent the 775 wonderful men and women of the Aurora Police Department, as well as the City Manager and the Mayor and Council of Colorado's third largest city.

We in Aurora are proud to play host to this important hearing today, and on behalf of our 308,000 citizens, I welcome you to our great city.

I speak to you today not only as the chief executive of the third largest police department in the state (and the second largest in the Metro Area), but also as a member of the Executive Board of the Colorado Association of Chiefs of Police. So I am proud to represent today the voice of Colorado's local and municipal police agencies.

We have convened here today to discuss two important issues: first, the broad issue of intelligence sharing and how law enforcement can use intelligence effectively to keep Colorado safe in a dangerous, post 9/11 world; and second, how we can all do our part to make the Democratic National Convention in August of 2008 a safe and successful event.

I'd like first to offer comments about the Convention and then to transition into a discussion about the broader intelligence challenges.

Colorado's law enforcement agencies have a critical role to play in the security of the upcoming Democratic National Convention, and we look forward to the opportunity to serve.

On August 1st, I forwarded a letter to Chief Gerry Whitman of the Denver Police Department in which I pledged that 300 officers -- 50 percent of our available uniformed strength -- will be available to assist the Denver Police Department for the week of the Convention.

We did not undertake this commitment lightly. To deliver on what we have promised, we will need to do extraordinary things. We will, for example, cancel all vacations and leaves, reduce our services in Aurora to only our most essential functions, turn plainclothes detectives and supervisors into uniformed street cops, engage in extensive

training, planning and preparation for the next 12 months, and we will likely place most of our personnel on 12-hour shifts for the duration of this National Security Event.

This will be a great burden and a challenge for our entire Department. We undertake this effort because we believe we are obliged to do so. Denver has asked for our help. The Aurora Police Department and our colleagues in Colorado law enforcement have a long history of coming to each other's aid when asked.

Beyond that, it is vital to all of Colorado that the DNC be a success -- a safe and secure event that promotes the national interest -- a symbol of our American Democracy in action. With the support of the City Manager and our elected leadership, Aurora will do its part to assist Denver and Colorado.

And in the process, our officers will gain once-in-a-lifetime experience in policing a major National Security Event, an experience that will enrich their careers.

We recognize the role of our federal partners in this event, starting with the lead agency, the United States Secret Service. We know that our colleagues in federal law enforcement, particularly the Secret Service and the FBI, will provide leadership, guidance, staff resources and intelligence to support the security umbrella that must be put in place.

I would be remiss, of course, if I didn't also state that we in local law enforcement expect our federal government to pay for that security umbrella. We are relying on our colleagues in Denver to work out the funding and reimbursement details, but this is a national security event of the first order. We expect our national government to pay for the security that not just Denver, but all of Colorado law enforcement, will provide.

In fact, I have made clear to my Denver colleagues that our offer of assistance to the Denver Police Department is contingent upon Aurora's taxpayers recovering all the costs of sending 300 officers a day to police the DNC.

In our desire to create the best possible physical security umbrella for the Pepsi Center and other DNC sites -- some of which, by the way, may be outside Denver in neighboring communities, perhaps even in Aurora -- we cannot forget our need for the best possible coordination of intelligence among all of law enforcement -- federal, state and local.

Since September 11, and with the advent of the Department of Homeland Security, we in local law enforcement have watched billions of dollars of "homeland security" money distributed throughout the land. My personal observation is that in the distribution of this money, not enough priority has been placed on the use of smart, effective criminal intelligence to make our communities safer.

After September 11, 2001, we all have a new appreciation for the threat of terrorism. Cops and police chiefs know that all terrorists are, first and foremost, criminals. Anyone who would threaten the safety and security of the DNC is a criminal. We have many tools

to fight criminals. Denver P.D. and its colleagues have the resources to lay down a first-class security blanket around the DNC. They will do the best job modern American law enforcement can do to physically secure a site and keep criminals away.

Where we are not as strong as we should be is in the area of criminal intelligence. We have an urgent need in Colorado for more and better intelligence on criminals, more capacity to identify them, to pool and share our knowledge, to link data systems, to apply the most advanced analytical tools, to identify the trends and intentions of the bad guys, and even to predict when and where they might strike next.

This, of course, is an issue for Colorado that goes well beyond our needs for the DNC in August, 2008. However, it is the DNC that presents the ideal opportunity for us locally, and for the federal government, to aid Colorado law enforcement in solving its long-term criminal intelligence needs.

Of necessity, we will temporarily build a world-class criminal intelligence apparatus to support the 2008 DNC. What we need to do now is to plan how to sustain that criminal intelligence apparatus permanently in Colorado, long after the DNC has ended.

In recent months, law enforcement leaders throughout the state have begun to talk about fashioning a long-term solution. The vision we have come to embrace has two parts: The first is that of a linked network of all the records management systems and other valuable data systems of all the police agencies in the state. The second is a robust, 24-hour “all crimes” intelligence or “fusion” center that every cop in the state can access for assistance to fight crime.

Even though many agencies, such as Aurora, have robust and modern data systems, we are not linked as we should be to the other Colorado police agencies. This weakness places Colorado well behind other states’ law enforcement communities.

Beyond merely linking data, our vision calls for a modern system with state-of-the-art analytical tools – one that can, for example, probe and make sense of all kinds of disparate data, that can perform visual link analysis, that can respond to ad hoc queries by talented analysts and detectives, that can find the link, for example, between a license plate, a phone number, a suspect’s description, a nickname, a tattoo, and/or a particular method of committing crime.

The good news is that some of the largest agencies in the metro area have already found the solution, although cost remains a hurdle. In the last year, the Jefferson County Sheriff’s Department, partnering with nine local police agencies in the County, purchased a proprietary software product that is generally recognized nationally by police chiefs as an excellent, if not the best, state-of-the-art solution. Within the next 18 months or so, we now predict that Aurora, Grand Junction, several state law enforcement entities, and the Counties of Arapahoe, Adams and Mesa will all buy this product and join this growing Colorado intelligence-sharing consortium.

Our vision is that this leap into modern, 21st-Century policing will become so effective, so appealing, so rich with success stories about bad guys caught in the act or prevented from victimizing others, that eventually every police agency in the state will join us. Our vision is also that the funding to do this will follow, because influential elected officials like you will embrace and support it. This crime-fighting network will become a force that can't be stopped.

The biggest hurdle to this first part of our grand vision is, as you might suspect, the financing. This is where you, as Congressional leaders, can help Colorado. Just a few weeks ago, Denver took the lead on this issue in applying for a grant through the COPS Office 2007 Technology Program. It seeks \$3.4 million to jumpstart our grand vision. Aurora and 20 other agencies partnered with Denver in the application. Approval of this grant is the absolutely critical event that will get us jumpstarted on our way.

We know that in evaluating grants these days, Congress has placed the highest priority on regional solutions to homeland security deficiencies. Well, we can't imagine a better regional solution or vision than that embodied in Denver's recent COPS grant application. Your support for this application, as well as for more federal assistance in the future to build out our intelligence-sharing capacity, is the number one thing you can do to improve security in Colorado.

The second part of our vision for intelligence sharing involves expanding the role and depth of the Colorado Information and Analysis Center (CIAC). Several police chiefs and sheriffs here have just recently begun to press to expand the CIAC into a full-time intelligence or "fusion" center, one that is staffed by 30 or more federal, state and local law enforcement officials.

This second part of our new vision for Colorado will require assistance and resources that we don't have now. I am sure you have been briefed on the best fusion centers and systems that have sprung up in other states since 9/11. We want to achieve the same here in Colorado, with your help.

As law enforcement leaders, we also recognize that everything we do to improve intelligence sharing in Colorado must be done in such a way as to protect individual rights and civil liberties. Everything we propose, and every system we will use, will at all times be in compliance with the letter and spirit of 28 CFR Part 23. This is consistent with best practices in law enforcement and with the stated policies of our agencies and that of the International Association of Chiefs of Police.

In closing, I echo the sentiments of my law enforcement colleagues here today. The upcoming Democratic National Convention will provide us with great challenges in the days ahead, but great opportunities as well. I urge you to use your influence in Congress to support us with the financial resources we need to have a safe convention, and with the additional resources to build a state-of-the-art criminal intelligence infrastructure in Colorado that will keep our citizens safe while protecting their rights.

Thank you again for the opportunity to appear before this committee. I would be happy to answer any questions you may have.