



September 24, 2007

The Honorable Bennie Thompson,
Chair,
U.S. House of Representatives
Committee on Homeland Security
Washington, D.C. 20515

The Honorable Peter T. King
Ranking Member
U.S. House of Representatives
Committee on Homeland Security
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Congressmen Thompson, and King,

The Electronic Privacy Information Center is writing to you regarding the recent gathering of thousands of demonstrators in the town of Jena, Louisiana for a peaceful protest. Our interest in this First Amendment protected activity is the operation of the Louisiana fusion center, and actions taken by other fusion centers in information collection, analysis, and dissemination on the demonstration, its organizers, protesters' travel, or participants.

Previously, EPIC's work helped uncover the fact that video surveillance cameras in Washington, DC put in place after September 11, 2001, were also used to monitor and track political protesters in the nation's capital.

Fusion centers are being proposed as a means of bringing together information from distributed sources for the purpose of collection, retention, analysis, and dissemination. Fusion centers are an amalgamation of commercial and public sector resources for the purpose of optimizing the collection, analysis, and sharing of information on individuals. This inter-networked communication infrastructure that could facilitate the creation of a modern surveillance society should not be underestimated.

Fusion centers raise a number of privacy and civil liberty questions because their functions and limitations are not defined by federal statute. We believe that it is within

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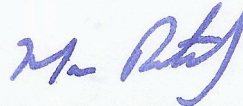
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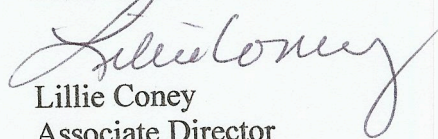
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the scope of your committee's oversight power to investigate what actions if any were taken by fusion centers as it relates to a First Amendment protected activity.

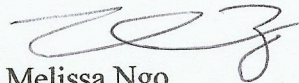
Thank you,



Marc Rotenberg
Executive Director



Lillie Coney
Associate Director



Melissa Ngo
Senior Counsel
Director, Identification
and Surveillance Project

cc: House Committee on the Judiciary
Senate Committee on Homeland Security and Government Affairs
Senate Judiciary Committee