



Department of Justice

STATEMENT OF
FEDERAL BUREAU OF INVESTIGATION

BEFORE THE
SUBCOMMITTEE ON OVERSIGHT OF GOVERNMENT MANAGEMENT, THE FEDERAL
WORKFORCE,
AND THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA
COMMITTEE ON HOMELAND SECURITY AND GOVERNMENT AFFAIRS
UNITED STATES SENATE

ENTITLED
“A NATIONAL SECURITY CRISIS: FOREIGN LANGUAGE CAPABILITIES IN THE
FEDERAL GOVERNMENT”

PRESENTED

MAY 21, 2012

UNCLASSIFIED

**Federal Bureau of Investigation
Statement for the Record**

**Before the
Subcommittee on Oversight of Government Management, the Federal Workforce,
and the District of Columbia
Committee on Homeland Security and Government Affairs
United States Senate**

**At a Hearing Entitled
“A National Security Crisis: Foreign Language Capabilities in the Federal Government”**

**Presented
May 21, 2012**

Introduction

Chairman Akaka and Members of the Committee, thank you for the opportunity to discuss the FBI’s Foreign Language Program.

The FBI’s Language Services Section (“LSS”) is responsible for the organization’s entire Foreign Language Program. LSS supports the FBI’s mission by providing quality language services to the FBI, law enforcement communities, and the Intelligence Community (“IC”) as a whole. These services include foreign language recruitment, hiring, testing, training, translations, interpretations, and other foreign language related functions in the FBI.

The FBI relies on foreign language capabilities to quickly and accurately inform operations and its executives. The success of the FBI’s mission is dependent upon high quality language services and the ability to translate and analyze information in a timely manner.

The FBI’s Foreign Language Program has made great strides in its ability to meet the rising demand of language needs since September 11, 2001, and has built a sustained and robust program. The program has moved forward through specialized training, increased hiring, retention, technology, and collaboration. The FBI has invested in multiple strategies to increase its foreign language capabilities.

Prioritization

The IC and the FBI have identified priorities to ensure the safety and security of Americans at home and abroad, as well as that of the citizens of our allied partners. Within the FBI, the Directorate of Intelligence’s Language Services Section (“LSS”) manages the workload across the Foreign Language Program as a reflection of the IC and FBI priorities.

Foreign Intelligence Surveillance Act (“FISA”) collection is further prioritized by tiers to direct resources consistent with the immediacy and nature of the threats. Whenever there are

multiple cases competing for resources, the FBI's Foreign Language Program consults with the FBI's Operational Divisions for guidance on prioritization of cases.

Since September 11, 2001, our FISA collection in counterterrorism and counterintelligence-related matters has increased significantly. These national security matters often involve the need for translation of various foreign languages in a time-sensitive environment. The FBI is also experiencing an increase in demand for foreign language assistance in other programs. Based on the continual increase in collection and requests for foreign language assistance since 2001, we project that demand for translation services across FBI programs will continue to steadily increase.

The FBI has challenges achieving the goal of translating all of the material it collects, largely because of the ever increasing volume and types of data that are being collected. This is consistent with trends throughout the IC. The FBI currently reviews the highest priority material it collects in a timely manner and must wisely use its linguist resources on the most productive sources of information.

Recruitment, Hiring, and Retention

Prior to September 11, 2001, translation capabilities, like most other FBI programs, were very decentralized and managed in the field. The Language Services Section ("LSS") is located at FBI Headquarters and now provides centralized management of the Foreign Language Program. LSS provides a command and control structure at FBI Headquarters to ensure that our linguist resource base of over 1400 linguists, distributed across 56 field offices, Legal Attachés, and Headquarters, is strategically aligned with priorities set by our operational divisions and with national intelligence priorities.

Since September 11, 2001, Foreign Language Program recruitment efforts have resulted in the addition of over 800 new Contract Linguists and over 100 new Language Analysts. The FBI has increased its overall number of linguists by 85%, with the number of linguists in certain high priority languages, such as Arabic, increasing by 261%, Urdu increasing by 733%, and Farsi increasing by 142%.

The FBI has been, and continues to be, successful in hiring new linguists in most languages. Based on workload metrics and review data, the FBI has devised and implemented a workforce planning model with recruitment efforts targeted toward languages where there is a shortfall or anticipated need. These recruitment efforts focus on those languages needed for the higher priority investigations. The FBI also harnesses the flexibility of a mixed labor force of linguists consisting of full-time government employees and contract linguists.

With a current workforce of over 1400 linguists, over 600 are Language Analysts and over 800 are contractors. We have also reduced our average applicant process cycle time. Additionally, when national security interests dictate, this cycle time can be compressed even further without compromising the quality of the process.

The FBI uses its pool of tested, cleared, and quality-vetted contract linguists as a direct hiring pool for the employee Language Analyst position. As such, we convert approximately 40 contract linguists each year to Federal service, replacing retiring or departing Language Analysts.

The FBI faces a few challenges with recruitment and hiring. At the outset, it is difficult to identify the right people. It is difficult to find individuals who are capable of passing the foreign language test battery at the level the FBI requires, a polygraph examination, and a full-scope background investigation. The FBI tests applicants across multiple language skills, including translation and foreign language speaking. On average, one out of every ten applicants gets through the entire contract linguist applicant process. Furthermore, there is a limited availability of qualified speakers of vital foreign languages who are U.S. citizens and have the English skills to support our requirements. We are competing against multiple government agencies and private companies for the limited pool of qualified linguist applicants in certain high priority languages.

We have taken several steps to mitigate these challenges, including:

- Hosting several dedicated contract linguist recruiting fairs each year, primarily focused in native and heritage speaking communities. We focus on field divisions with significant foreign language collection, space for growth, and large foreign-speaking populations in their domain. For each event, we advertise in local foreign language media sources, send out press releases and distribute flyers throughout the heritage communities. We conduct an initial foreign language screening on site and briefings about the Foreign Language Program that include topics such as working as a contract linguist and information about how to apply to become a contract linguist. By the end of FY2012, we will have had four such events.
- Attending heritage community and university hiring events, the American Translator's Association annual meeting, and actively participating in the annual IC Virtual Career Fair.
- We are leveraging other language-enabled employees in the FBI to address the need for critical language ability. There are currently over 3,000 FBI employees and contractors who have certified foreign language proficiency scores at or above the working proficiency level, including Language Analysts and Contract Linguists. Thus far in FY2012, the FBI has awarded Foreign Language Incentive Pay ("FLIP") to over 2,000 FBI employees with validated foreign language skills in critical languages. This allows

the FBI to leverage a larger pool of language-enabled employees in times of need. Financial incentives such as FLIP are a valuable tool to build, sustain, and track language resources in the FBI.

- Leveraging IC and other partners through cross-community resource sharing, joint duty assignments and interagency short-term temporary duty assignment opportunities. We work with the National Security Education Program's National Flagship Universities and Georgetown's English for Heritage Language Speakers programs to funnel language-capable people into the contract linguist process. We reach out to the IC, specifically the National Virtual Translation Center and the National Language Service Corps, when we have language needs that we cannot meet with in-house language resources. We currently have a linguist out on joint duty, an IC linguist in on joint duty, and we are preparing to receive two additional joint duty linguists with critical language skills from other agencies. We anticipate that the practice of sharing linguists will continue to grow.

FBI Language Analysts are part of the FBI's Intelligence Workforce, which includes all FBI intelligence professionals, including Intelligence Analysts ("IAs") and Special Agents ("SAs"). The Intelligence Workforce is supported by validated competency models which drive selection and hiring, training and development, performance management, and career progression. Career paths which reward and develop technical experts in intelligence operations are essential to the Bureau's ability to retain a world-class national intelligence workforce.

Top Foreign Language Needs

Our challenges in assessing our foreign language needs and capabilities are due to the unpredictability of emerging threats, thus our needs are fluid and vary depending on current events and threats. However, currently our top foreign language needs include Arabic (Yemeni), Chinese, Farsi, Pashto, and Somali. Again, these are common needs across the IC.

Training

The FBI's Foreign Language Program strives to improve our skills and retention rates through training. We don't offer foreign language training only to develop proficiencies of Language Analysts, but also to stimulate career-long language learning among all FBI employees.

In order to meet the rising demand of language needs since September 11, 2001, the FBI's Foreign Language Training Program ("FLTP") has significantly increased the range and volume of the foreign language training it offers to personnel who need to develop language proficiency to do their jobs. In FY 2011, the FLTP offered 88,855 hours of classroom training in 50 languages to 616 students. Ninety-one percent of these students met or exceeded our

language proficiency training goals. Since September 11, 2001, the total number of students participating in the FLTP has increased by 379%.

Programs through which training is provided include academic immersion training, study abroad, and tailored language courses. Since 2005, the FBI has been working with a long-time partner to offer intensive Arabic training to Special Agents. Since 2009, long-term foreign language training at the U.S. Department of State's Foreign Service Institute ("FSI") has been made available. Several agents have graduated from the program, and additional agents will enter the program in August 2012.

Since September 11, 2001, the FBI's Language Professionals Training Program has moved the Foreign Language Program forward by providing increased training opportunities to its linguists who already possess the foreign language skills they need to do their jobs. Training programs provided to linguists include Language Analyst Specialized Training ("LAST") 1.0, a two-week class intended for all linguists to take at the beginning of their careers at the FBI. More than 800 linguists speaking more than 40 languages and dialects have been trained since its inception in FY 2006. LAST 1.0 is followed by LAST 2.0, a two-week class intended for linguists with more than five years of Bureau experience. Since its inception in March 2010, over 100 linguists have been trained. In addition to these programs the FBI has offered a language cross-training program for linguists to develop proficiency in other critical languages through long-term training at the FSI. To date, over 30 linguists have graduated from this program, gaining proficiency in six critical languages.

Between September 11, 2001, and the end of FY 2010, the FBI provided training in consecutive interpretation to Bureau linguists at contract vendor schools. In FY 2011, the FBI worked with ODNI and assumed the administration of a series of general and language-specific translation and interpretation workshops open to all qualified linguists in the IC. Since the program's inception in February 2011 the FBI has trained over 450 linguists in the FBI and throughout the IC.

Technology

Investment in Human Language Technology (“HLT”) measures productivity and allows for optimal use of our human resources by saving man hours. HLT tools are efficient and provide the ability to triage and process large volumes of information while enabling the workforce to enhance productivity. We have increased our capability to meet rising language demands since September 11, 2001, through the introduction of state-of-the-art triaging technology tools such as Speaker ID, Language ID, Terminology Management, Translation Memory, and Spam Filters to streamline automated processing so that linguists can focus on essential content. These technologies have been developed in partnership with other IC components.

We have a secure network that allows us to efficiently route translation requests to any field office where linguistic resources are available. This business model and capability enable the Foreign Language Program to better manage the workload, address critical requirements in a timely fashion, assign the best qualified linguists to the task, lessen travel expenses, and add great flexibility in recruitment.

Other Efforts

A certain portion of our foreign language surveillance collection is mixed with English material. As a result, LSS created an English Monitoring Facility in June 2002, and we now have two such facilities. This unit is comprised of English Monitor Analysts charged with reviewing the English language material in these mixed language cases, thereby allowing Language Analysts to focus on the foreign language material and reducing the workload of Special Agents and Intelligence Analysts.

Implemented in 2005, the FBI’s Language Quality Control Program rapidly developed into a mature robust program with other intelligence partners and other government agencies. This Language Quality Control Program has been replicated and serves as the benchmark across the IC. This program provides valuable feedback regarding the quality of translations to linguists and managers.

NVTC

The National Virtual Translation Center (“NVTC”) was established in 2001 under the authority of Section 907 of the USA Patriot Act to provide accurate and timely translations for the USIC in support of national security. On February 11, 2003, the Director of Central Intelligence designated the FBI as the Executive Agent for the NVTC.. The NVTC operates within a cost-effective virtual model that connects NVTC program staff, translators, and customers nationwide via a common workflow management system. Since its inception, the NVTC has complemented language capability gaps and provided translation support (including

surge) for the IC and Combatant Commands. The NVTC also complements other Defense Department organizations and civilian U.S. Government agencies that serve U.S. residents with limited English proficiency, using a resource-effective and cost-for-service business model. NVTC's Doha (Qatar) unit in particular has supported in-theater USCENTCOM, USAFRICOM, and U.S. regional Embassy translation requirements in the areas of counterterrorism, military intelligence and combat operations, and public diplomacy and foreign relations. The NVTC has translated more than 500,000 pages of text and 2,000 hours of audio files into English from approximately 100 different languages and dialects since 2009 alone. The NVTC is also an IC leader in facilitating innovative multilateral collaboration in the fields of Human Language Technology and Computer-Assisted Translation.

Conclusion

Mr. Chairman, the FBI remains committed to meeting its language needs and partnering with the greater IC, as we confront common challenges that threaten our national security. Since September 11, 2001, the FBI has made considerable progress on the Foreign Language Program human capital and technology fronts. Thank you for the opportunity to submit this written Statement for the Record on behalf of the Federal Bureau of Investigation.