



**HOUSE ARMED SERVICES SUBCOMMITTEE ON TERRORISM, UNCONVENTIONAL
THREATS AND CAPABILITIES
JIM SAXTON, NEW JERSEY
CHAIRMAN**

PRESS RELEASE

For Immediate Release:
February 15, 2006

Contact: Josh Holly (HASC), 202-225-2539 or
Greg Keeley (SAXTON), 202-225-4765

OPENING STATEMENT OF JIM SAXTON

Joint Hearing on the Able Danger Program

Washington, D.C. – The Subcommittee on Terrorism, Unconventional Threats and Capabilities meets this afternoon in joint session with our colleagues from the Subcommittee on Strategic Forces to explore the U.S. Special Operations Command (SOCOM) project known as Able Danger. This is an oversight hearing conducted by the two subcommittees of jurisdiction with the goal of determining whether Able Danger represented a missed opportunity to avert the tragedy of September 11. Our purpose is to find out what happened, and let members draw their own conclusions from the testimony presented.

The Able Danger story is complex—no single individual has first hand knowledge of all the relevant events. The subcommittees, guided by our friend and colleague Curt Weldon, who has devoted much study to this issue, have invited a wide range of witnesses to testify in both open and closed session. Each has a piece of the narrative to relate. As in any complex mosaic, no one had the benefit of the whole picture. I caution the witnesses to tell the committees what they have first hand knowledge of, and not speculate about events of which they have no direct evidence. Even though we have assembled many key witnesses, some few have left government service and have declined to appear for personal reasons. We reached out to every relevant witness made known to us so that we could hear all the evidence. We are, after all, the primary committee of jurisdiction for this program and are ultimately responsible for its oversight.

Members must decide for themselves what to believe from the testimony presented today—there will be some inconsistencies. Having reviewed the totality of the evidence, I do not believe

that Able Danger represents a major blunder by SOCOM, the Army, or any presidential administration. Rather, I think it is yet another example of the many pointed out by the 9/11 Commission of the federal government's inability to integrate intelligence information effectively and take appropriate action. It is conceivable that Able Danger, if fully and aggressively pursued and vigorously acted upon, could have provided key intelligence that may have averted 9/11. It's easy to say that today, with the benefit of clear hindsight; we can and have said the same thing about other missed opportunities—the 9/11 Commission report lists many across the federal government. Put in its proper perspective, Able Danger, despite its promise, was a new, untested program just beginning to forge a niche in the intelligence community. At the time the alleged chart with Mohammed Atta was produced, no Able Danger product was used for operational purposes.

Unfortunately, it took the tragedy of 9/11 to drive home our inability to share information among federal agencies. To our credit, we have acted to correct these deficiencies by enacting the Intelligence Reform Act, creating a Director of National Intelligence, and establishing a cross cutting National Counter Terrorism Center. Further, the Able Danger project started by SOCOM in 1999 was brought to the headquarters in Tampa and continues to this day, under a different name, thanks to the far sighted leadership of General Pete Schoomaker. Far from being a sad story, I think a critical examination of the facts shows that the federal government has made much progress, and that SOCOM in particular was astute enough to press ahead even before 9/11.

###

<http://armedservices.house.gov/>