

E-5454/06EN

Answer given by Mr Frattini
on behalf of the Commission
(24.1.2007)

1. The Commission confirms that a high level contact group was set up at the EU-United States (US) Ministerial Troika in the area of Justice, Freedom and Security on 6 November 2006. The Group will discuss information sharing and protection of personal data for law enforcement purposes, as part of a wider reflection on how best to prevent and fight terrorism and serious trans-national crime, while safeguarding fundamental rights. The group has not yet met and it is therefore not possible to make any assessment of its work.
2. It is an informal ad hoc Group with no formal status. It will be composed of officials from the Council Presidency, the Commission and the US Departments of State, Justice and Homeland Security. The Group is expected to work mainly on identifying and developing EU and US commonalities in the protection of personal data.
3. It would not be usual for Parliament or the US Congress to participate in discussions of this sort. However, as the member of the Commission responsible for Justice, Freedom and Security stated at Parliament's plenary session on 13 December 2006, the Commission will keep Parliament informed of developments in the Group's work. The Commission also supports the idea of regular meetings between the European Parliament and the US Congress on these and related issues.