

Statement of Dennis C. Blair
before
The Senate Select Committee on Intelligence
United States Senate
January 22, 2009

Madam Chairman, Mr. Vice Chairman, Members of the Committee: It is a distinct honor and privilege to appear before you today. I am also honored that President Obama has placed his trust and confidence in me, deciding to nominate me to the position of Director of National Intelligence.

I want to express deep appreciation and thanks to Chairman Feinstein, and to Vice Chairman Bond, for holding today's hearing, and I look forward to your questions. In addition, let me say from the outset, if confirmed, I look forward very much to working with you on the many important issues before the Intelligence Community, and before the Nation. This Committee has a wealth of experience and wisdom. If confirmed, I will seek your counsel and advice – and seek it frequently – in addressing the many challenges ahead.

Importance of Intelligence

Nothing is more important to national security and the making and conduct of good policy than timely, accurate, and relevant intelligence.

Nothing is more critical to accurate and relevant intelligence than independent analysis.

The President has made clear to me, and to the American people, that he wants to hear the facts, he expects independent analysis, and he wants to hear all points of view.

As John Adams famously said, "Facts are stubborn things." The best national security decisions take account of the facts on the ground. Sometimes those facts are unpleasant; sometimes they are inconvenient; often they are ambiguous. Whatever they are, they must be presented accurately and fully. Beyond the facts on the ground, interpretations of their significance differ. There is an obligation to bring those differing views forward. There is an obligation to speak truth to power. If confirmed, I will fulfill that obligation personally, and I will instill respect for that obligation in those who work for me.

Threats and Opportunities

Let me describe some of the key challenges the intelligence services face in supporting policymakers as well as troops, diplomats, and law enforcement officials in the field.

The Intelligence Community is charged with the task of assessing threats and providing timely warning. This Committee holds an annual worldwide threat assessment hearing. If I am confirmed, it will be my privilege to appear before you on that topic.

The United States is engaged in three campaigns in which there are immediate threats to American lives, properties and interests. First is the campaign against anti-American terrorists with global reach who seek to harm us or our allies, partners and friends. These groups include al-Qaeda and other extremist organizations as well as the groups they inspire but do not control. The second campaign is in Iraq and the third in Afghanistan, where the United States has deployed troops, diplomats, and nation builders. Providing intelligence support for these three campaigns consumes the largest share of Intelligence Community resources.

The day-to-day demands for tactical intelligence for these missions, geographically concentrated in Southwest Asia, cannot be allowed to crowd out the mission of building a deeper understanding of the complicated interlocking dynamics of the entire region, from Kashmir to Istanbul. We will need that understanding as we forge a strategy for the region.

Additional near-term issues of concern are many. They include North Korea's nuclear weapons and missile programs; Iran's nuclear capabilities and intentions, as well as its missile program; the security of Pakistan's nuclear arsenal; and peace and stability in South Asia. They include Israeli-Palestinian violence, with its possibilities for escalation and implications for regional stability.

Many important threats to American national security go well beyond the traditional nation-state-based threats of the past. The intelligence services need to have open minds, change traditional ways of thinking and be bold and creative in identifying possible threats to the nation. It is the responsibility of the intelligence services to penetrate and understand these new transnational threats just as thoroughly as we did the Soviet Union in the days of the Cold War.

In addition to anti-American terrorists with global reach, our adversaries include organizations – some nation states, some private and some criminal – that proliferate weapons of mass destruction and the means to deliver them.

They include organizations trafficking in drugs.

They include those using the global communications system to learn our secrets and proprietary information to compete with us or attack us.

There are additional trends that affect American security, and may pose grave dangers – global warming, energy supplies, food prices, and pandemic diseases, among others.

Today's threats to American interests are more diffuse, more fast-paced, and seem more urgent than ever because of the trends of globalization – worldwide transportation, worldwide information systems, the spread of scientific and technical knowledge, an interlocking global economy, and the ubiquitous and incessant news cycle. The intelligence agencies must look beneath the breathless headlines to understand the facts and their significance for American interests.

The Intelligence Community also needs to address the longer-term geopolitical challenges. How the United States adjusts to and manages the growing power and influence of China, India, and key countries in the developing world is a major long-term challenge for policymakers. The Industrial Revolution caused a centuries-long shift in power to the West; globalization is now shifting the balance again. The *Global Trends 2025* report is one example of the Intelligence Community's contribution to this discussion.

Failing states pose another set of challenges. Countries without effective governments, with internal economic disparities, and with domestic religious, ethnic, or tribal tensions can slip into anarchy, with tragic consequences for their own citizens, and with potential dangers to other countries. Somalia is one example, among many.

The Intelligence Community has global responsibilities. We need to understand better the interplay of trends, threats, and opportunities in Latin America and Africa, so that our leaders can forge wise policies and take effective actions as the importance of these regions increases.

Identifying opportunities as well as threats is an extremely important balance for intelligence agencies to strike.

- While the United States must hunt down those terrorists who are seeking to do us harm, the Intelligence Community also needs to support policymakers who are looking for opportunities to engage and work with Arab and Muslim leaders who are striving for a progressive and peaceful future for their religion and their countries;
- While the United States must understand China's military buildup – its extent, its technological sophistication and its vulnerabilities – in order to offset it, the Intelligence Community also needs to support policymakers who are looking for opportunities to work with Chinese leaders who believe that Asia is big enough for both of us and can be an Asia in which both countries can benefit as well as contribute to the common good;
- While the United States needs to understand Russia's military plans and ambitions in what it calls its "near abroad," the Intelligence Community also needs to help policymakers understand the dynamics of European security issues including the actions of our allies and friends, in order to craft policies that will support American objectives.
- While the United States must identify weak places in worldwide medical surveillance systems and prepare for pandemics, the Intelligence Community can also find opportunities to work with governments and other organizations on behalf of our common interest in strengthening the world's early-warning, defensive and recovery systems;

- While policymakers need to understand anti-American leaders, policies and actions in Iran, the Intelligence Community can also help policymakers identify and understand other leaders and political forces, so that it is possible to work toward a future in both our interests;
- While traditional friends of the United States disagree with individual American policies on specific countries and issues, the Intelligence Community can also help policymakers identify the many government leaders and influential private leaders – in Europe, in Asia and elsewhere – who share American ambitions for the future and are willing to work together for the common good.

Identifying these opportunities for American policy and statecraft is as important as predicting hostile threats.

There is a final cluster of subjects on which intelligence agencies must provide good advice to policymakers and officials taking action:

- Science and technology developments – where is innovation taking place around the world, and how can it help or hurt American interests?
- Economics and finance – how is power being redistributed, and what are the developments that will make a difference to the United States?

For these areas, and also for many of the others outlined here, the analysts and information in our intelligence agencies are not the sole, and often not the best, resources. Private organizations – businesses as well as consultants – think tanks, NGOs, universities, national labs, federally funded research and development centers, other government analysts, and similar international and foreign centers have a great deal to offer.

It is the responsibility of the Director of National Intelligence to take advantage of outside information sources – databases and experts – and to add the insights gained from secret intelligence to present policymakers the clearest possible picture of the nature of these trends, and the potential effects that alternative American policies can have on them.

The Role and Responsibilities of the DNI

The office of the DNI is not yet four years old. Ambassador Negroponte and Admiral McConnell have made important progress during that period of time. A wider range of analysis, and more points of view, are now brought to the attention of policymakers. Information sharing on terrorism-related information has improved. Joint Duty in the Intelligence Community, essential for building a unified workforce, is starting to take hold. Security clearances take less time. These are important contributions, and they

should be recognized. At the same time, the Committee knows that much work lies ahead. For my part, I want to acknowledge the contributions that those who lead the Intelligence Community already have made.

The 2004 Intelligence Reform and Terrorism Prevention Act spells out the role and responsibilities of the DNI. The Act specifies many important improvements in the organization and functioning of the country's intelligence services. My approach is a straightforward one. If confirmed, I will work to fulfill the intent of this legislation.

The DNI is the principal adviser to the President, to the National Security Council, and the Homeland Security Council for intelligence matters related to the national security. His responsibility is to provide timely, accurate and relevant intelligence.

Leading the Intelligence Community, the DNI needs to satisfy the strategic intelligence requirements of policymakers as well as the tactical requirements of military units, diplomats, and front-line officers of the Department of Homeland Security and state and local law officials. The DNI needs to lead the integration of intelligence sources – human, signals, geospatial, measurement and signature, and open source. Such integration mutually empowers, and maximizes, the contribution of each intelligence source. The DNI needs to ensure that the whole of the national intelligence enterprise is always more than the sum of its parts. I believe the hardworking, smart, and dedicated officials of the intelligence agencies, along with the resources the Congress has provided, are adequate to provide the right kind and amount of intelligence support to all who need it from the President down to the soldier in the field.

The DNI should place the emphasis on managing others, not doing their work himself. The DNI should hold agencies accountable for doing their jobs, but should not replicate activities that individual agencies perform well. The DNI should concentrate on activities that no single agency can perform by itself, and use his authority to encourage and enforce combined action that brings together the strengths of all the intelligence services to accomplish the common missions.

The DNI must keep the Intelligence Community at the cutting edge of innovation. The business of intelligence has been radically transformed, and continues to be driven, by the information revolution. In a generation's time, the Intelligence Community has gone from an organization hunting secrets, to an organization interpreting the vast ocean of information available every day – even as it still hunts secrets. How the Community collects, analyzes and provides added value to policymakers and operators is profoundly affected by this changing and dynamic information environment.

Developing a high-quality workforce for the future is the DNI's responsibility. Any organization is only as good as its people. I have been deeply impressed over many years with the many smart, dedicated and brave professionals in the Intelligence Community workforce. It is the DNI's responsibility to give them the right missions, to clear away obstacles in their path, and then it is the DNI's privilege and pleasure to watch them produce amazing results. It has been an honor to work with them, and, if I am confirmed, it will be an honor to lead them.

The Role of Intelligence in a Democracy

All officers of the Intelligence Community, and especially its most senior officer, must conduct themselves in a manner that earns and retains the public trust. The American people are uncomfortable with government activities that do not take place in the open, subject to public scrutiny and review.

Unlike many other parts of the government, the activities of intelligence officers must often be secret to be effective. Therefore, there is a special obligation for the leadership of the Intelligence Community to communicate frequently and candidly with the oversight committees, and as much as possible with the American people. There is a need for transparency and accountability in a mission where most work necessarily remains hidden from public view.

The first part of building trust is building relationships. I want to establish a relationship of candor and trust with each Member of this Committee and, if confirmed, work to sustain and enhance that trust. Equally important, I will work to rebuild a relationship of trust with the American people.

The second part of building trust is to carry out the mission of the Intelligence Community in a manner consistent with our Nation's values, consistent with our Constitution and consistent with the rule of law. The intelligence agencies of the United States must respect the privacy and civil liberties of the American people, and they must adhere to the rule of law.

Lawful Surveillance, Lawful Detention and Interrogation

In a dangerous world, government agencies need authority to collect intelligence on terrorists before they strike, in order to protect the American people. But in a free society, that authority cannot be unlimited. It must be exercised pursuant to law.

I do not and will not support any surveillance activities that circumvent established processes for their lawful authorization. I believe in the importance of review and regulation of the use of those surveillance authorities. I believe in the importance of independent monitoring, including by the Congress, to prevent abuses and protect civil liberties.

I believe strongly that torture is not moral, legal, or effective. Any program of detention and interrogation must comply with the Geneva Conventions, the Conventions on Torture, and the Constitution. There must be clear standards for humane treatment that apply to all agencies of U.S. Government, including the Intelligence Community.

I believe the U.S. Government must have clear and consistent standards for treatment of detainees. Those standards must comply with the Detainee Treatment Act, the Convention Against Torture, and Common Article 3 of the Geneva Conventions. All who are responsible for treatment of detainees must receive training on those standards,

and training must be reinforced regularly. It is not enough to set a standard and announce it. Regular reinforcement and oversight is necessary to make sure the standards are being applied correctly.

I agree with the President that the detention center at Guantanamo has become a damaging symbol to the world and that it must be closed. It is a rallying cry for terrorist recruitment and harmful to our national security, so closing it is important for our national security. The guiding principles for closing the center should be protecting our national security, respecting the Geneva Conventions and the rule of law, and respecting the existing institutions of justice in this country. I also believe we should revitalize efforts to transfer detainees to their countries of origin or other countries whenever that would be consistent with these principles. Closing this center and satisfying these principles will take time, and is the work of many departments and agencies.

Conclusion

Madam Chairman, Vice Chairman, and Members of the Committee: If confirmed, I will work closely with this Committee and with the Congress. The leadership of the Intelligence Community must earn and sustain the confidence and support of this Committee if it is to win the confidence and support of the American people. A close dialogue and relationship with the Congress is what our Constitution and laws require, and what is practical and necessary. Your wisdom, sustained interest, and sustained engagement enhance our Nation's intelligence capabilities.

I look forward to your questions. #