

1 February 2007

Opening remarks by Mike McConnell – Nominee to become the Director of National Intelligence (DNI) appearing before the U.S. Senate Select Committee on Intelligence

Thank you Mr. Chairman,

It is an honor and a privilege to come before this Committee today. I also am deeply honored and grateful to President Bush for his trust and confidence in nominating me to become the second Director of National Intelligence or “DNI” as we slip into acronyms.

I want to express my sincere appreciation to you, Chairman Rockefeller, and to Vice Chairman Bond for your consideration of this nomination. Both of you, and the other members of the Committee, have been most helpful and gracious during my courtesy calls. We have some very important issues to address and, if confirmed, I look forward to working the issues with each of you.

Today, in an age in which the threats faced by the nation are so very different from those of the past, the DNI must call on the wisdom and experience of this committee to be effective in helping to protect the nation. If confirmed, I will consult with you often, seek your counsel and take it seriously.

I want to thank Senator Warner, for his very kind remarks in introducing me this afternoon. In addition to being a great American of long and distinguished service to the nation, he is the senior Senator from my adopted home State. I also had the honor of working for Senator Warner when he was Secretary of the Navy and as a member of this committee during my time as the Director of the National Security Agency in the 90's. Thank you Senator Warner.

I also want to thank my wife, Terry, our four children, and our wonderful grandchildren for their support and patience as I contemplate a return to public service. I must admit, we had some long and serious talks about returning, after the 30 years of my first tour, but in the final analysis, they all are very supportive.

After spending most of my adult life in the intelligence community focused on getting the right information to decision makers in time and format to be useful, I am excited about the possibility of returning. Fortunately, my work for the past 10 years after leaving government service, has allowed me to stay focused on the National Security and Intelligence Communities as a consultant. I have followed the issues and initiatives and, if confirmed, I hope to be quickly and directly relevant to build on the accomplishments of Ambassador Negroonte and his team. While preparing for the confirmation hearing, I have focused primarily on the new Intelligence Reform legislation and the process issues in the community. I have not yet engaged in all the substantive and policy issues that I know are of strong interest to the committee. If confirmed, I will come up to

speed quickly and engage promptly to answer your questions. As I noted in my written response to your questions, I understand and am fully supportive of the role of the Congress in your oversight responsibilities.

Unlike just a decade ago, the threats of today and the future, take advantage of globalization to move at increasing speeds. The tools that make globalization possible, such as rapid transportation, instant global communications, global finance, computerization, data mining, make our productivity increase and our standard of living improve. At the same, those who wish us harm, use the same tools to attack the nation to further extremist views and causes.

Today's threats, as we witnessed during 9-11, cross geographic boundaries and that now includes inside the United States. We know that terrorist organizations today are making plans for attacks on our citizens inside our borders. It will require coordinated responses by the entire community of intelligence professionals, working with other security professionals, to identify and prevent terrorist groups from carrying out those attacks. The current DNI website lists terrorist events that were carried out and terror events that were prevented over the past few years. I would recommend that our citizens review that information since it is so easy to get involved in our day to day lives and forget the seriousness of these threats.

The first responsibility of intelligence is achieve understanding and to provide warning. As you know, there is a large community of intelligence professionals who dedicate their lives to carrying out this mission and the other missions of the community.

If confirmed, I will continue strong emphasis on integration of the Intelligence Community so that we may better serve the nation to meet these new threats. That will mean accomplishing the full intent of the Dec 2004 legislation on Intelligence Reform and Terrorism Prevention.

To be more effective, I believe we must have

- a more integrated and collaborative community,
- better sharing of information and processes to share
- increased focus on the needs of our customers,
- more efficient acquisition and financial accounting,
- improved and streamlined security processes, and
- deeper penetration of intelligence targets to produce the

needed information for tactical, operational and strategic decision makers. I believe the IC needs to move beyond the “need to know” approach of the Cold War to a new approach that embraces “the responsibility to provide” to meet the threats of the future.

Many of the threats and challenges were identified in the questions the committee asked me to answer. If I am confirmed by the Senate, I will do my very best to make meaningful progress in addressing these challenges.

I also understand that the conflicts in Iraq and Afghanistan and the role of the Intelligence Community in these conflicts and in combating terrorism overseas, are some of the most pressing priorities for this committee. If confirmed, I will work with you in addressing these issues as some of my highest priorities.

If confirmed, I also will consult with this committee, the House Intelligence Committee and other Congressional leaders. I will be open to your questions, ideas and proposals. I will use my interaction with the committees as important input in shaping my recommendations and actions. Of course, I understand that it is the President who will ultimately decide on what changes are made in the executive branch's approach to these high priority areas.

I want to return to the serious new threats of today: the current planning by Al-Qaeda to attack inside the United States and to attack U.S. interests and the interests of our allies outside the United States. Not many years ago, the Intelligence Community focused almost exclusively on foreign threats outside our borders. What is new is the need to focus on these threats inside our borders. We must be effective in collecting and processing information to protect Americans from terrorism and to do so consistent with our constitution, our laws and our values to respect the rights and privacy of our citizens. We will need to work together to develop processes and procedures that are effective in meeting these goals.

Mr. Chairman and members of the Committee, I did not seek to return to government to become the DNI. I agreed to the nomination

because I love our nation and because the President asked me to come help because he thought I could help. I hope your deliberations will reach a similar conclusion.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman. That concludes my opening remarks.