

**Opening Statement by Chairman Rockefeller
Confirmation of John M. McConnell to be DNI
February 1, 2007**

Today the Committee begins its consideration of the nomination of Mike McConnell to be the next Director of National Intelligence. Before we get into the substance of statements and questions, I want to recognize Admiral McConnell's wife Mary who is accompanying him and ask Admiral McConnell if he would like to introduce the rest of his family here with him today.

Welcome to all of you. And of course welcome to our colleague and valuable member of this Committee, Senator Warner, who will be introducing Admiral McConnell.

Admiral McConnell appears before us after a long absence from government service. He has not, however, been absent from the field of intelligence. He served in the United States Navy for 29 years, rising to the rank of Vice Admiral, a rare accomplishment for an intelligence officer.

During this period of public service, he served as Director of Intelligence on the Joint Staff during the Persian Gulf and as Director of the National Security Agency, our nation's largest intelligence agency.

Upon retiring from the Navy Admiral McConnell went to work for Booz Allen Hamilton where he has been a Senior Vice President for Intelligence and National Security business. He also is currently Chairman and Chief Executive Officer of the Intelligence and National Security Alliance, an industry group that works with the government looking for ways to solve some of our complex intelligence problems.

Admiral McConnell, I was particularly interested in reading in your responses to our pre-hearing questions on how you came to be an intelligence officer. As you described it, after serving a tour in combat in Vietnam you wanted to know how to provide better intelligence to those in combat who needed it. This tells me some important things about you. First, you know what combat is really like and how important it is to try to keep the young men and women serving in our military out of harms way whenever possible. Second, you know how important intelligence is to our military commanders and to those who make the decisions affecting our national security. And finally, you are an intelligence

professional by choice, not accident, and that means you have a dedication to this field.

If you are confirmed, you will be taking over an experiment still in its early stages -- an experiment intended to make sure that U.S. intelligence provides policy makers, military commanders and other decision makers with the best information available.

While the Congress passed the Intelligence Reform and Terrorism Prevention Act of 2004 in the wake of the 9/11 Commission Report and this Committee's report on problems with prewar intelligence related to Iraq, those were only the most recent in a long line of studies and reports describing structural problems in the Intelligence Community. The question we will have for you today, and the challenge you will face if confirmed, will be to figure out if we got it right.

I am convinced that separating the DNI from the day-to-day operation of the Central Intelligence Agency was the right step. For the first time ever we now have someone whose primary responsibility is organizing the different pieces of the intelligence community. I also think the arrangement benefits the CIA since it now has the undivided attention of its director.

But beyond the act of separating the two jobs, it is less clear whether the structure of the Office of the DNI is ideal to accomplish its mission. We did not pull the technical collection agencies out of the Defense Department and we did not give the DNI direct authority over the main collection or analytic components of the community.

We gave the DNI the authority to build the national intelligence budget, but we left the execution of the budget with the agencies. We gave the DNI tremendous responsibilities, the question is did we give the position enough authority.

I will also want to hear from you today about how you envision your relationship with us. And this will be an important line of questioning. This Committee is charged with overseeing the operation of the Intelligence Community. That is a job that Vice Chairman Bond and I and all the other members take very seriously.

Congressional oversight is sometimes viewed only as criticism, and at times we will criticize. But it is our goal to make the Intelligence Community the best that it can be. Oversight should be cooperative not confrontational.

In order to accomplish this goal we will have to work together to ensure that this Committee has the access to the materials it needs to conduct oversight. It is no secret that I have not been happy in the past with decisions by the Administration to restrict access to required information by our members and staff. Depriving our Committee the information it needs, or over-restricting access to the information, not only weakens congressional oversight of secretive intelligence programs, it generates unnecessary suspicion and, worst of all, undercuts the effectiveness of these activities.

Vice Chairman Bond and I are committed to working together to overcome this problem but we will need your help. In our discussion today I am not interested in rehashing what has or has not transpired in the past. I want to establish a positive and collaborative relationship for the future. I look forward to getting your views on these and other issues you are going to be facing.

I now recognize the distinguished Vice Chairman of the Committee, Senator Bond, for any remarks he would like to make.