

The Honorable John L. Ratcliffe

**Nominee for the Position of
Director of National Intelligence**

**Statement for the Record
Before the Senate Select Committee on Intelligence**

May 5, 2020

Chairman Burr, Vice Chairman Warner, and distinguished Members of the Committee – I am honored to appear before you as the President’s nominee to be the next Director of National Intelligence (DNI). Before I begin, I would like to acknowledge the monumental efforts of the Committee staff, my own staff, as well as the many officers at the Office of the Director of National Intelligence (ODNI) who helped get us here today. I know there is a tremendous amount of preparation that goes into a confirmation hearing in the best of times. These past few weeks have been particularly challenging for everyone, and I appreciate their dedication to making today possible.

Before we begin, I would like to share a few thoughts on the coronavirus pandemic. Like many of you, I have questions about what exactly caused the outbreak, what if anything could have slowed the spread, and where we go from here. I am sure we will get into that discussion today. But it is important to take a moment to recognize the human cost. This pandemic has cut short the lives of over 60,000 Americans to date. It has sickened over a million Americans, and it has impacted us all. My deepest sympathies are with the victims and their families. I salute the efforts of all those on the front lines risking their own health and safety to help victims and carry out essential functions. That includes the dedicated Intelligence Community (IC) professionals reporting for duty and carrying out their mission here and around the world, regardless of the risk. These are truly trying times, and your honor and sacrifice will not be forgotten.

I would like to begin by thanking President Trump for this incredible opportunity and for his confidence in me. I’m humbled by the prospect of working side-by-side with the dedicated men and women of the world’s finest intelligence enterprise.

I would also like to thank former U.S. Attorney General John Ashcroft for his kind, gracious, and humbling statement. General, you have been a leader here in this Senate and have been a protector of liberty, the rule of law, and our national security during the challenging years after the terrorist attacks of 9/11. I am forever grateful for everything that you have done for me, and for your faith in me. If confirmed, I will not let you down; so, thank you very much.

I certainly also want to recognize and thank my fellow Texans. It has been the privilege of my life to represent the constituents of Texas’ Fourth District here in Congress. I will forever owe all of you a debt that I can never properly repay.

Finally, and most importantly, there is no way I could contemplate undertaking an endeavor like this without the encouragement and support of my family. I would like to thank my wife, Michele, and my daughters, Riley and Darby. Back in Texas, but with me in spirit, is my mom, Kathie, as are my five sisters and brothers, Kitty, Bob, Sharon, Pam

and Larry. Watching from above, I'm sure, is my dad, Robert Ratcliffe. Like many of you, my career in public service is a direct reflection of my family's selflessness, sacrifice, and their enduring love of country and for me. I simply have no words to adequately express my gratitude to all of them.

While my journey here today has been a mixture of public and private experience, of positions in and out of politics, it has been largely shaped by my desire to serve the public. An important value instilled in me as the son of two public school teachers, I believe there is no higher calling than serving the American people. This passion for service, combined with my experience, abilities, judgment, temperament and relationships, make me the right person to successfully lead our intelligence enterprise at this point in our country's history.

In 2005, I became a federal prosecutor in the U.S. Department of Justice. During my four years in the U.S. Attorney's Office for the Eastern District of Texas, I served in various roles, including Chief of Anti-Terrorism and National Security, First Assistant U.S. Attorney, and finally as the U.S. Attorney. It was in these roles that I first learned the value of coordinated and integrated interagency effort, and the importance of information sharing among federal, state, and local partners.

During those four years, my daily responsibilities involved managing, directing and prosecuting national security and terrorism-related matters. As its Anti-Terrorism Advisory Coordinator, I led and managed the district's Joint Terrorism Task Force activities, working closely with other members of the Department of Justice, the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI), and state and locals. In these roles, I gained a new understanding and appreciation for the federal intelligence enterprise and the critical importance of timely, accurate, and objective intelligence in keeping Americans safe.

For the past six years, I've been fortunate to serve as the U.S. Representative for the 4th Congressional District of Texas. In this role, I have prioritized national security issues through active participation on the House Intelligence, Judiciary and until recently, the Homeland Security Committees. I also serve on the House Ethics Committee, where I work to ensure the Congress remains transparent and accountable to the American people.

Although serving the constituents of the 4th Congressional District of Texas has been the honor of my lifetime, if confirmed, I look forward to serving a new group of constituents – the President of the United States, this Committee, the broader Congress, the great men and women who comprise the IC, and the American people.

If confirmed as the DNI, my top priority will be to present the President, the National Security Council, and senior policymakers and this Committee, with objective and timely intelligence to help better inform decisions concerning the future and safety of our great Nation.

As the President's principal intelligence advisor, the DNI has both a responsibility and duty to ensure that intelligence informs strategic, tactical, and operational national security decisions and policies; and to every extent possible, is collected, analyzed and reported without bias, prejudice, or political influence.

If confirmed, I will be a champion for the professional women and men of the IC and their craft through appropriate engagement with Congress and other intelligence consumers and stakeholders. I see the DNI as more than just a leader, manager and integrator. The DNI must at times be an arrow catcher, a problem solver, and an obstacle mover for the respective agencies – addressing issues, resolving conflicts and ensuring that tools and resources are in place. And always, the DNI must be the voice to advocate for, and defend the interests of, the IC and its intelligence warriors.

In directing such an enterprise, I will at all times pursue this mission within the authorities granted by statute, Executive Order, and other guidance from the President and Congress to lead the 16 other IC elements and the ODNI.

The President understands that the role of principal intelligence advisor demands the delivery of national security analysis and assessments that at times will include uncomfortable and unwelcomed news. The President and I have a good rapport, and I believe he respects and trusts my ability to offer clear, concise, and substantive viewpoints on the pressing national security matters. If confirmed as the DNI, you have my commitment to deliver accurate and objective intelligence, and to speak truth to power, be that with this Committee or within the Administration. I also look forward to strengthening the relationships among the Community, the Administration, and the Congress, relationships that are so vital in ensuring our Nation remains secure.

In my various conversations with many of you prior to this hearing, I was asked what I saw as the greatest threats facing our nation, what qualifications I will bring to bear, and what areas I plan to focus on during my tenure. Let me begin with threats.

The threats that we face today are more diverse, dynamic, and geographically diffuse than ever before. In no particular order, I see several issues as some of the most challenging we currently face:

- China: From the race to 5G to preventing cyber espionage, we need to make sure we are not just observing the growing threat from a distance. We must ensure we have the resources and skills to counter this threat, and that we are actively working to do so. In addition, we must understand the geopolitical and economic impacts of COVID-19, as well as China's role in the spread of the virus.
- Russia: We know that Russia and other foreign state actors continue to seek opportunities to undermine our democracy by interfering in our elections as well as our allies. They have sought to interfere before and will continue to do so. We must ensure the IC is postured to support a whole of government approach to thwart such efforts in 2020 and beyond. Among other challenges, Russia continues to develop hypersonic weapons and other advanced capabilities that will test our defense posture and threaten our space assets.
- Cybersecurity and Supply Chain Security: Cybersecurity and supply chain security remain critical to the safety and security of the American people and our intelligence enterprise. We must continue to make smart, proactive investments in the workforce and technologies of the future.
- Terrorism: Preventing terrorist attacks, here in the homeland and overseas, remains of critical importance. While we must continuously balance limited resources across IC missions, we must remain vigilant against the threat of terrorism; our hard-won gains can be reversed. We must not allow ISIS to see a resurgence or allow state sponsors of terrorism like Iran to gain new footholds. If confirmed, I will work to ensure the IC supports the Department of Defense, as well as foreign allies and partners in fighting terrorist threats abroad, and the FBI and other law enforcement entities in fighting terrorist threats at home.
- Foreign Malign Influence: Also of grave concern are the impacts of misinformation generated by state adversaries seeking to fuel societal discord and violence. These campaigns can impact lives of many Americans and cripple our economy. In today's information age, it is not always easy to separate fact from fiction. It is critical we work to understand our adversaries' plans and intentions, devise ways to counter their efforts to further divide and weaken us, and inform the public to the maximum extent possible. Counterintelligence threats from state and nonstate actors must also remain a focus of the IC.
- North Korea: The North Korean regime's continued possession of nuclear weapons and pursuit of systems capable of delivering them remains deeply concerning. The threat these weapons pose to the United States and our allies in

the region cannot be overstated. We must remain focused on this threat and ensure policymakers have the information they need.

- Iran: The Supreme Leader's continued pursuit of ballistic missiles, advanced conventional weapons, and a nuclear capability remains a grave threat to the interests of the United States and our allies. Iran's aggressive state sponsorship of terrorist groups and proxies in the region and around the world is an immense security challenge. The IC must be postured to provide critical early warning, analysis on Iran's nuclear research activities, and provide support to sanctions, and those who assist Iran in thwarting them, in pursuit of the maximum pressure campaign.

This list is by no means exhaustive. We also face real and emerging threats from rising political instability in places like Syria, Afghanistan, and Iraq; extremist threats from failed states such as Yemen, Somalia, and Libya; challenges in space, quantum computing, and artificial intelligence; increasing counterintelligence risks worldwide; and again, the unknown structural changes and risks likely to emerge around the world from a global pandemic.

To address these challenges, the IC needs leadership that has the trust of the President, the Congress, and other IC leaders. I hope to be that stabilizing force, using my experience as a prosecutor, U.S. Attorney, and Member of Congress. My record reflects that I have extensive national security and intelligence experience from positions held in the Department of Justice and the U.S. House of Representatives. In particular, my experience integrating and coordinating national security information and priorities at the federal level, between federal agencies, and with state and local partners in a non-partisan manner is directly transferrable to one of the core job responsibilities of the DNI.

My demonstrated leadership in managing federal civil servants and budgets in pursuit of national security objectives while upholding legal and constitutional protections has likewise provided invaluable preparation for some of the management challenges of this position.

Similarly, my experience in Congress, successfully legislating in the area of integration, coordination, and sharing of national security information and intelligence to protect against a wide range of threats to our national security underscores my ability and commitment to bipartisanship and consensus building

My leadership and oversight roles in Congress have also provided important insights into the components within the DNI's jurisdiction and the National Intelligence Program

budget, and the corresponding obligations to provide Congress with accurate and timely information.

I believe my ability to lead, manage, integrate, coordinate across multiple entities, and drive solutions in a nonpartisan manner makes me well qualified to lead the IC, and to advocate, elevate, and augment the vitally important efforts of the men and women who dedicate their lives to its mission.

In preparation for this opportunity, and in many of my conversations with all of you, I was often asked whether the ODNI is truly integrating the work of all 17 IC elements, and whether it is focusing resources on the most critical threats to prepare our country for both near term and long-term challenges. Allow me to share what I have learned.

The men and women supporting the ODNI are dedicated career civil servants from across the IC. Much of the ODNI workforce is comprised of staff on rotation from other IC agencies to integrate the diverse interagency cultures, skills, and talents. So, rather than being yet another large bureaucracy, in many ways, the ONDI represents the best of the IC.

For me, the original intent of the ODNI—as many of you initially envisioned and worked so hard to create—stands firm. The ODNI continues to serve as an integrating agency, created in a post 9/11 environment, to eliminate stove-piping by individual intelligence agencies and ensure collaboration and integration across the intelligence elements. I do not think we can ever underestimate the value of truly integrated intelligence analysis and operations or assume that agencies would do so on their own without a forcing function.

I have also been asked about the size of the ODNI – specifically if it is too large, too duplicative, and whether it is focused on the most critical threats. From my time on the House Intelligence Committee, conversations with my predecessors, and firsthand experience preparing for this opportunity, I have been in awe of and impressed by the talent the ODNI has acquired and the professionalism of its workforce, and its responsiveness to their gamut of responsibilities.

That said, I believe every government agency must constantly review its operations to ensure it is setting the right priorities, achieving mission objectives, and spending taxpayer dollars efficiently. If confirmed, I will work with IC leaders to assess what is working well and where we need to make some adjustments. I want to ensure that our resources are aligned to address the most critical threats we face now and in the future, and that we are eliminating, wherever possible, barriers to our success. If confirmed, I plan to approach every decision regarding the ODNI with the question of “does this make

the community more effective, more efficient, and more resilient?”

If confirmed, a top priority would be working to assess the ODNI and its alignment with its core mission. I will look at where it is being a successful enabler, where it provides necessary and purposeful redundancies, where unnecessary ones can be eliminated, where there are gaps and how we fill these gaps or reorient our efforts. I fully understand and appreciate how scarce resources are and ensuring both the ODNI and the Community are resourced for maximum mission impact will be my focus.

If confirmed, I would also work tirelessly to ensure the IC remains focused on the strategic threats we face, from state and non-state actors alike, to cyber threats and WMD; from terrorism, economic and election security, to security concerns from China’s use of advanced technologies like 5G. My goal would be to ensure the IC is organized and has the resources to stay on top of these threats over the short and long-term.

Critically, to remain the world’s premier intelligence enterprise, the IC must continue to recruit and retain the best and brightest workforce our nation has to offer. Frankly, this is going to be one of the IC’s key challenges moving forward. While government service will never be able to compete with compensation offered by the private sector, that is not why career professionals do the job. The women and men of the IC are dedicated civil servants who rarely, if ever, receive the recognition of their sacrifice to country and mission. To that end, I will work to ensure these dedicated professionals are fully empowered to execute their duties and complete our shared mission objective of keeping Americans safe, secure, and free. As DNI, there will be no bigger champion of their hard work and dedication to this country than me.

There is nothing more imperative than maintaining the integrity and objectivity of intelligence analysis and information. If confirmed, I will ensure that the integrity of this institution remains strong, that we recruit and retain the best employees, that we speak truth to power, and that the men and women of the IC analyze intelligence using our established analytic tradecraft standards.

I am honored by the opportunity to be here with you today, and I thank you for your consideration of my nomination. I look forward to answering your questions.