



**Remarks and Q&A by the Director of National Intelligence
Mr. Dennis C. Blair**

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Video of this event is available online at www.dni.gov/video.

DR. MARK LOWENTHAL (President and CEO of the Intelligence & Security Academy): We're now up to our keynoter for the end of the morning and our keynoter is Adm. Dennis Blair, who as you all know, is the third Director of National Intelligence. He took that job earlier this year at the request of President Obama. Prior to that, his previous government job, he was the commander-in-chief, U.S. Pacific Command, which is the largest of the combatant commands.

He had a long career in the Navy and a career in intelligence. He was – in addition to being the director of the Joint Staff, he was the first associate director of Central Intelligence for Military Support at the CIA. And something that some of you don't know, but in that capacity, he was present at the birth of the predecessor of NGA, which was NIMA. So please join me in welcoming the Director of National Intelligence, Dennis Blair. (Music.)

DIRECTOR BLAIR: Well, thanks very much, Mark. Nice to be back together with you also after some of our projects together in the past. And I'd really like to salute both Stuart Shea and Keith Masback and the U.S. Geospatial Intelligence Foundation for truly a first class event. This USGIF has played a very important role in recent years, linking those of you in industry to those of us in the Intelligence Community.

That's good for the country that we work together, so that as you all in business make your day-to-day decisions, in your companies, you know where it is we're heading, what our problems are, what our requirements are; and that together, we can do really what's the right thing for the country, because it's truly that union of people with technology that makes a difference in so many things that the United States does, and especially in our intelligence business.

And I just have the privilege of seeing it everyday as the Director of National Intelligence, and I'll talk a little bit about it. And it's founded, in large part, on this partnership between those of you – those patriots of you in the private sector and those of us who are serving in government. Now, you've already heard from many of the leaders of the Intelligence Community. In fact, I sort of feel like I'm summing up after a meeting of the executive committee, which we have every week or two back in Washington.

You've heard from Director Carlson of the NRO, Adm. Murrett of NGA, Gen. Deptula of the Air Force, Gen. Clapper who is the undersecretary in the Pentagon. And normally, if you have four leaders of the Intelligence Community preceding me, I'd simply say, "Well, it's time for me to step back and take a look at the big picture." And that's really, a little bit of what GEOINT is about, isn't it? Because you really can step back and look at the big picture, the forest. You can zoom down on the trees.

In fact, you can zoom down in on the weeds, something that some make a specialty of where I go to work. And if a tree falls in the forest, no one hears it; but you all can take a picture of it. (Laughter.) And you have the evidence. You can look and see if guys like Kim Jong Il are feeling well, or left their garage doors open.

And it's absolutely amazing to me how much this field of GEOINT and the fusion of GEOINT with the other things that we do in the Intelligence Community, has advanced in the last few years.

But this is my first GEOINT conference here, so let me take a step back – a little bit of a big picture to tell you what my job is, the Director of National Intelligence. Let me share a few things about the national – a few tenets of the national intelligence strategy which we've published about six weeks ago and then talk a little about the role that GEOINT plays in this overall intelligence enterprise that I have the privilege of leading. And then finally, we'll turn the speech into a dialogue and try to get to as many questions as we can.

So starting with the Director of National Intelligence and the role – and I understand that those of you who are veterans of the GEOINT conference have heard my two predecessors talk. And so you're familiar that the job itself was established by the Intelligence Reform and Terrorism Prevention Act of 2004. And as the DNI, I fundamentally feel three overall, overarching roles.

The first one is as head of the Intelligence Community, which comprises some 16 organizations that range from completely separate agencies to bureaus inside other departments – those bureaus and offices range across the departments of Defense, Justice, Homeland Security, State, Energy, Treasury. There's just a tremendous range of skills and expertise that we can draw on to support policymakers on the one hand, and to support effective action in the field.

I noticed that this symposium finishes tonight with a concert by the World Classic Rockers, a supergroup of members from Steppenwolf, Santana, Lynyrd Skynyrd, Journey, Boston and Toto. Some of these guys I even recognize. (Laughter.) And that supergroup might be sort of a metaphor for the Intelligence Community – playing together well, actually sometimes being better than the sum of your parts.

And you get to hear one group tonight rocking professionally on, as I understand it, "Africa," "Born to be Wild," "Evil Ways," "Free Bird," "Don't Look Back" – sounds a little bit like an intelligence action somewhere near the Sahara, doesn't it? We'll have to see. But it's better when we in the Intelligence Community play off that same sheet of music, and the harmony comes together to make something that no individual musician, no individual agency, no individual intelligence professional could do alone.

I see many, many instances of that, lots of them involving GEOINT. And I'll tell you about a couple of them, and I'll tell you about what we do to try to make that happen as much as we can to serve this country. Leading the Intelligence Community means to set priorities, trying to align the incentives and forcing compliance, providing leadership on the crosscutting issues that affect more than one of these 16 different organizations that are formed together into the Intelligence Community.

And I can tell you that all of the really important issues, all of the really tough intelligence challenges that we face cannot be assigned just to one agency. They have to be done by all of us working together.

In the late 1940s, we were basically set up as national intelligence, internal security and military intelligence. The CIA had one, the FBI, the Defense Department. And that organization simply is no longer relevant. When the Cold War ended, the clear line between national intelligence and military intelligence went away; 9/11 demonstrated the vital importance of integrating foreign intelligence and domestic intelligence in order to protect the country.

Now, one of the most powerful documents that we have for setting priorities across this intelligence enterprise is called the National Intelligence Priorities Framework, the NIPF. My staff tees up these topics, we work them within the executive committee of the Intelligence Community. I take them up to the National Security Council.

They make their input, and then the President confirms them. And that's how we determine what our highest areas of concern, and what are some of the other things that we have to also keep an eye on – spend a lot of attention on, but aren't quite as much of an immediate attention. And then we try to spread our resources of collection and analysis, integrated across that framework.

Now, setting policies and procedures in order to get that done across the Intelligence Community is done through Intelligence Community Directives – ICDs. They're extensively coordinated in a thorough process that gets buy-in for them, works out a lot of the issues; and there are a lot of tough issues involved in them, as you can imagine.

And then finally, they're signed and published and they lay out sort of the goals and the rules for our intelligence enterprise – things like classification, information sharing, functional management, security clearance reciprocity, joint civilian duty requirements. So these are really – these really set up the rules of how we operate together in order to be greater than the sum of our parts. So that's job number one, this leadership function.

Job number two is as the principal advisor to the President on intelligence matters. Every day, there's the President's daily intelligence briefing to keep him up to date, to warn him of the threats that are coming, to alert him to opportunities that are available. And I serve as the top advisor to the National Security Council; but responsibilities of this particular function are much wider than one document or one set of meetings.

I'm responsible for the intelligence that informs the entire national security policymaking process that begins with interagency groups, the information to individual members of the national security

community, proceeds up that hierarchical set of meetings until it culminates in the National Security Council that's chaired by the President.

I also meet regularly with Congress, providing them information on what's going on in the world and their responsibilities as partners in leading the country. They, of course, also provide the budget and the oversight for the Intelligence Community and that's a very serious responsibility to make sure that they're both informed, have the information they need to be partners.

And they also play in my third role as the DNI, which is to manage the national intelligence program budget. It's critically important that we allocate our resources properly across the Intelligence Community, both by agency and by function, such as, for example, GEOINT. The procedures give us a balanced program so that all 16 of those agencies can play their proper roles in focusing on the national intelligence priorities that I mentioned that cut across the roles of all these individual agencies.

Putting that budget together within the executive branch for the President's approval, justifying it to the Congress, which are the ones who authorize and appropriate it. It's an extremely and time-consuming part of this job. And then improving, also having to do with relations with Congress, really improving those relations with Congress has been a central focus of what I and the other Intelligence Community leaders who've come in, Director Panetta of the CIA, recognize that we have a challenge to rebuild some of those relations on both ends of Pennsylvania Avenue, and I think we're making progress on that. And that's the right thing for the country, to make this a partnership, not an adversarial relationship.

Now, underlining all of these three roles that I outlined for the Director of National Intelligence, is really that underlying responsibility to make sure that the Intelligence Community is coordinated, that it's integrated, that we really do connect the proverbial dots to find the proverbial needle in the haystack, to mix two proverbial metaphors.

But as you all know who have dealt with the Intelligence Community over the years, some of this integration happens naturally. Smart people, been in business a while, know the other members of the Intelligence Community and those in the national security organizations that we work with. They know who has the overlapping skills. They can get together, reach out to each other and make good things happen.

But also, it often requires effort from the top to blast people out of their silos in order to increase our shared effectiveness, to reduce overlap, to clear away some of those obstacles to cooperation and integration, to make sure that our precious resources are not used duplicatively, but complement each other in order to get the tough intelligence jobs that we need to do for the country. And that's really what drives me as I wake up and go to work every morning.

Let me turn, briefly, to the unclassified public version of our recently revised national intelligence strategy. It gives us our marching orders, our blueprint for the next four years. We wrote it and extensively coordinated it within the Intelligence Community. And then we also cleared it through the National Security Council. It contains four strategic goals, and let me mention them briefly.

The first is to enable wise national security policies. We do that by continually monitoring and assessing the international security environment. We do it so that we can warn policymakers about threats. We can alert them to opportunities. And when the administration decides to review a policy or to address a situation, our job is to give a clear picture of the facts on the ground or around the world – in many cases that affect that particular issue.

And then when policymakers have ideas on what they might like to do, it's our job to assess what might be the effect on the ground, the effect in the world of the different proposals. It's been a busy time since this administration – in the what, nine months now that this administration has been in office as a bunch of issues – big policy issues have come down the road at us, or as we've looked at others. And the Intelligence Community has played a strong and very important – very important role.

The second strategic goal is to support effective national security action. Once the nation decides to take a move, to send troops to some corner of the world, whether those are already deployed in Iraq, those who have been added to Afghanistan. And it's not just troops, it's negotiating teams, it's diplomats, it's provincial reconstruction teams, it's American members of nongovernmental organizations, it's coalition partners.

Once the United States decides to be part of an action, then it's up to us in the Intelligence Community to provide them the intelligence that they need in order to be effective in the field. And I think it's this area that really has made the most dramatic progress in recent years. And you talk to some of the practitioners of the – what has really made a difference in at least my time in watching intelligence support to the field.

I think Iraq first and now Afghanistan have been the real catalysts for this drive that we have in the Intelligence Community to get the best possible, actionable intelligence to field units overseas, irrespective of what the security classification originally was of that information, or irrespective of where it came from, whether it came from satellites flying high in the sky, a human intelligence source, a ground sensor.

But to get that in usable form to people who can use it, who have these common endeavors in countries that we're trying to support, both American and international policies. And we're just getting better and better at it. We're doing it overseas and also as recent events have shown, we're getting better and better, in this country, at making sure that intelligence information gets to the right people who can take action on it and protect the countries. And we've seen these recent arrests of – which I think have been cases that might not have happened seven, eight years ago, but are now possible because this drive to support effective action.

Now, our third goal, very much of concern to this audience, also, is to deliver balanced and improving capabilities so that the future Intelligence Community will be more effective, even better than that of today. We have to stay on the cutting edge of technology, but we have to make choices.

The technological possibilities are multiplying exponentially, but our budgets will grow much more slowly. There are difficult choices to be made in space systems, air breathers, especially in data storage – data handling, storage requirements for the enormous amounts of video, voice and other

data that we're now collecting that we need on file to be able to use to build historical patterns and to pull together in order to provide fused intelligence where it counts.

And our fourth strategic goal is to operate as a single, integrated team. We're far more effective when we work together that way, when we share information and skills, when we work closely with policymakers in interagency meetings in Washington and with action officers in the field who are getting the job done.

And in my time back here in the intelligence world, and now after about 15 years of being on the outside, more in the user than the policy and action area, I've just seen the amazing results that can be produced when we build that teamwork across agencies, across "ints," across big issues.

I've seen scenes in a darkened room with a flickering computer screen. There's a young sergeant in uniform who's actually in front of it on the keyboard. He's looking on his monitor at the same picture that some adversary is looking on his monitor half a world away, an adversary whose data we're trying to pull over to our side, maybe to alter – maybe to keep something from happening.

Right over beside him, there's a young kid with a wispy goatee and a New York Yankees baseball cap turned sideways. He's pretty happy this morning, by the way. And he's saying to the sergeant, okay, you're almost getting there. A few more keystrokes, let it run a minute. Okay, you've got it; you've got root access.

On the other side, there's a young woman who speaks the dialect of that country where the computer sits that we're trying to take advantage of. She's working with the young sergeant to understand the nuance of the words on the screen, the cultural context of what's going on there.

And usually, sitting in the back somewhere, there's some gray beard about my age who's been doing this kind of intelligence with different, more primitive tools for 40 years, who's learned what works and what doesn't work, has a few ideas of his own. And it's something like this that's happening every day across the Intelligence Community. It's getting priceless intelligence information that we can use, that's taking action that confounds our adversaries and helps our friend that happens day after day after day.

I just came yesterday from St. Louis, the western campus of the National Geospatial-Intelligence Agency, and I saw again, countless teams like this who are working on real problems, taking advantage of technology, reaching across agencies, reaching around time zones, reaching across space in order to do magic things. And that's what the future of intelligence is, if we can work together as an integrated team.

And it's welding together teams like that, whether it's things I can do by pushing down from the top of the organization, just by encouraging the idea that this is a good thing to do, making sure that we nourish it from the bottom up, clearing away the obstacles to that sort of cooperation and integration from happening. That's how we really achieve great intelligence that this country deserves.

Now, in addition to those four goals, the national intelligence strategy lays out our mission objectives, that is, the "what" that we intend to accomplish. Tasks like combating violent

extremism, countering the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction, enhancing cyber security. On top of that, we have our enterprise objective. That's the "how" we get the job done. Improved integration and sharing, improved acquisition.

Our overall national security strategy calls on us to be more agile. We can't always predict the future, so we have to be able to react and operate in it when it comes up on us and we understand what it really is. We have to be more integrated, as I said many times.

And, again, we have to exemplify American values, because as you all know, these are real patriots who are working in the U.S. Intelligence Community, doing great things for their country in ways that we can't talk about. They don't have to be a mystery, even though we have secrets and the country should be proud of them as I am.

As I mentioned at the outset, one of the big things that makes us effective as a national Intelligence Community is the technology that we can leverage with those of you in the private sector – both the things that you can build with us, the expertise that you have in order to get this job done. So let me talk briefly about some areas in which the products and the members of the U.S. Geospatial Intelligence Foundation tie in so superbly to our National Intelligence Strategy.

That first goal mentioned was enabling wise policy. This goal puts a premium on collection against leadership intentions of our adversaries or of other countries that we deal with, or of groups that aren't countries, but who are important to American interests, or the interests of our allies and partners.

And the key here is integrated collection strategies in which we take our very – our most sensitive, our most advanced systems. We put them together and we direct them towards providing the best intelligence we can to support these key policy decisions. A recent example in which this has worked very well has been the Qom Reactor.

The – not reactor – excuse me, I don't want to make news here, but the Qom centrifuge – (laughter) – the Qom centrifuge facility that's being build in Iran. We've been watching through various intelligence means this construction site for a while; and it's not secret that if you're keeping an eye on the building of a large structure, GEOINT is right there in the heart of keeping you informed and of understanding what's going on. We put the GEOINT together with intelligence sources coming from many other sources, a strong team working together, human brains, technical intelligence assessments.

And we had a good picture of what was going on ready when the moment turned, as it did at the U.N General Assembly this year and the President decided with the cooperation of other allies, to make public the fact of this previous hidden and undisclosed centrifuge facility, which Iran was building against several U.N. Security Council resolutions that had been – had been passed. Enabling wise policy, GEOINT at the heart of what we did to support it.

The second goal, as I mentioned, is supporting effective action, and we've really made, as I've said, tremendous strides. Technology can help us with speed, correlation display and language.

Conventional military units in Iraq and Afghanistan have now come to expect outstanding GEOINT. They don't leave home without it.

What's magic to me to see is that previously, we sort of classified GEOINT in an inverse proportion to the distance away from the target that you were. You all remember stuff from satellites we didn't really talk about. If it was from an airplane, it was kind of okay, and if you saw it with your eyes, it was unclass.

We've realized that what really matters is getting together everything that you can see about a target across the entire electromagnetic spectrum, from the very long wave up through the short wave, through the visible spectrum. And to get it together, display it in a way that it can be used by the people who have to take action.

I think the great stride that we made in Iraq was previously – that was available to some of our highly specialized units, at very high classification levels, and we realized that we actually could take this information, make it available to wide numbers of users, whether they be conventional military units, diplomats, government workers, and that that would empower that activity.

To those of us who used to have to go into some room on a ship to be shown a display that we weren't allowed to talk about when we walked out of the room, this is really a tremendous stride forward that has made all the difference in terms of our effectiveness in the field. And we never want to go back. We just want to go forward.

The challenge there is to get that to others outside the armed forces. I think the armed forces, after Iraq, have become used to that sort of intelligence, and are very demanding customers, which is good. They know what's available. They challenge us to find ways to get them. Our challenge, I think, now is to get that to some of the more nontraditional customers who are going to make a difference in very important areas of the world to the United States, like Afghanistan.

The key to success in Afghanistan will not be done by solely military forces. They, in fact, will just provide the environment under which improved governance, the improvements to the capabilities of Afghan officials on the scene, greater opportunity, can actually harden that country against the Taliban. And intelligence can empower those activities which are important to us, just the way it's empowered the providing security by the military units.

Our third strategic goal, delivering balanced and improving capabilities, is extraordinarily difficult. And it's going to take a lot of work between those of you who are in the private sector and those of us who are in the Intelligence Community. We are – our budgets are continually squeezed by the present, by – putting that – by funding what we're doing everyday.

Now, these daily activities, as I mentioned, are driving us to make improvements and that's good, and that leads to balancing capabilities for the future. But we still have legacy systems that are wearing out. We have to decide what to do about them. We have to leave that margin so that we can take advantage of technological opportunities in order to do our job better.

The Next Generation of Electro-Optical systems is one set of decisions we've made along that line. Last spring, the Secretary of Defense and I decided to pursue the development and acquisition of the Next Generation Electro-Optical system. And it's a classic example of making an investment and improving and balance capabilities.

We're trying to balance intelligence for military requirements and for other requirements with technical cost and risk. I happen to know it's balanced because I've received criticism from virtually every side of the spectrum on it, so I know I have it just about right. But this is going to be something that's important to us and our successes for many years.

The Next Generation Electro-Optical system will be a core component of our national security system. We studied the requirements of any new imagery system to replace our current architecture. We studied literally hundreds of potential solutions, trying to project our minds into the future, consulting with end users, outside experts.

We worked this in great detail with the Hill and we came to the conclusion that this country should not surrender the GEOINT information advantage that we currently enjoy over both current and potential adversaries. And the question was how to build a long-term sustainable imagery architecture.

The NGEN is going to be a descendant, both of past successes in this type of collection system; but just as important, we're going to profit from our past mistakes. It's tragic to lose a satellite on the launch pad. It's downright embarrassing to lose it in a factory on the drafting table, or in the requirements process. And to avoid all of that, we've taken advantage of the painful lessons that we've learned in some recent years, in order to make sure that the NGEN system does it right.

So as part of our architecture, it's not just building that system, but it's also continuing and in fact, increasing our strong reliance on commercial providers of imagery – commercial imagery of various wavelengths as an integral part of our GEOINT support to both policy and to action, and we are taking – we can continue and will increase our efforts to integrate it as a foundational part of GEOINT in the future, which, as I mentioned, we blend with other types of intelligence in order to do the job we have to do.

Now, the Senate Select Committee on Intelligence offered an alternative proposal that had a lot of good ideas in it that, after looking at it hard, review within the Intelligence Community and the Department of Defense and the White House, we realized that it just wouldn't meet the number of critical requirements for intelligence that we saw in the future.

But the process was a healthy one. There were strong criticisms, strong passions. People cared about the important issues, and I came out with what I think is the right kind of balanced program for the future. We'll continue to look at new technologies. There are amazing things that can be done in order to get – learn things that we never were able to do before.

But, we're basically committed to a foundational imagery architecture that is balanced, that incorporates both government systems and commercial systems, and we think it will serve this country well for many years into the future. As for our final strategic goal that I mentioned, the

operating as a single integrated team, I would say that the National Geospatial-Intelligence Agency under Adm. Murrett really serves as a model for the members of the rest of the Intelligence Community.

A little over a quarter of the NGA workforce at any one time is not at a light table in either Bethesda or St. Louis, they are out in Kabul or even outside of Kabul in Afghanistan. They are in Latin America, they are in Africa, they are all around the world making sure that the GEOINT is used in a complementary way, in order to do the right thing both out in the field and to be connected to the policy intelligence that we do back in Washington.

I really think that GEOINT as I say, is a model for playing a strong team role in what we do in the Intelligence Community, and it was great to see what they're doing in St. Louis, and I've seen them on my trips out to the field being extremely, extremely effective.

Let me just turn back to not that long ago, it's certainly vivid in my memory to provide a little perspective. When I think of the month of October, I always think back to one of the formative intelligence tales of the past which was the Cuban Missile Crisis, 47 years ago – the missiles of October.

It was really an event that brought GEOINT out into public for the first time, extremely important national security issue and foundational impression for many of us of my generation. It was probably before a lot of you all were born. I happened to have been a junior in high school. I recall it as a pretty exciting time, so take yourselves back to this day, October 21st, 1962; you now have access to the Oval Office.

Today would be the third U-2 flight in a week. This one brings back some photos that show that missile sites are being built on the north shore of Cuba. Flights earlier in the week showed some more new missile sites on the west side of the island that hadn't been known about. The President was first briefed on the fact of these missiles in Cuba just five days ago.

He called a meeting immediately afterwards with his advisers to come up with courses of action. Met with the Soviet foreign minister two days later trying to convince him that Soviet aid – and the Soviet foreign minister told him that it has be a mistake, these pictures that you are looking at are agricultural implements.

You can store a lot of grain in a missile silo I guess – (laughter). But after seeing these photographs, after questioning photo interpreters and imagery analysts, the President decided to quarantine Cuba with the Navy. And tomorrow he will bring in Congressional leaders and show them proof, again – GEOINT products of the Soviet missile bases. And at 7 p.m. tomorrow night he will go on television, still relatively new and untried medium of communication, to tell the American public about these bases in a live television address; how he is bringing up the armed forces to DEFCON-3.

Adlai Stevenson will display GEOINT in the United Nations General Assembly and challenge the Soviet counterpart to deny it. In two days, the Organization of American States will approve the quarantine, while the President will receive a letter from the Soviet premier warning that a naval

blockade will lead to war. The Strategic Air Command will go to DEFCON-2. Five days from now, the President will be shown more photos from a reconnaissance flight that shows the Soviets trying to camouflage the missiles realizing that they can be photographed.

The Soviet premier will then send another letter to the President proposing that he'll remove them if the President publicly pledges not to invade Cuba. In six days the Soviet Union will shoot down a U-2 over Cuba killing the pilot, almost leading to U.S. military action. And the President's advisor and brother and the Attorney General will meet with the Soviet ambassador about a proposal for the United States to remove missiles from Turkey, and the President will offer the option of making a public statement that the U.S. will not invade Cuba if the missiles are removed.

And then finally, a week from today, October 28th, the Soviet premier will announce over Radio Moscow that he is going to remove the missiles from Cuba. The President will immediately respond in a positive manner, will agree secretly to remove U.S. missiles from Turkey. But, since that won't be made public, it'll appear that the United States won the standoff without making concession. The end result will be the Soviet Union will not be embarrassed internationally, they're the ones who blinked.

And all this wouldn't have happened without GEOINT playing a key role. And really hard to – we can read the history of that, try to get the feel of what was going on as the interplay of intelligence and policy, the high stakes of nuclear weapons, international prestige on the line, fundamental doctrine of the United States like the Monroe Doctrine coming into play. We can only guess at what the feeling was like, but we know one thing for sure: That when you can bring good – (audio break).

DIRECTOR BLAIR: All right? Okay.

But if you can – one thing's for sure, that if you can bring good, unambiguous, clear, timely intelligence into the policy process, you can help make sure that things are averted like nuclear war, that your country can follow its interests and it is really that sort of goal that we all have in the Intelligence Community, whether it is geospatial intelligence or any other.

And what is our job in the future? It is to carry on the legacy of those who were doing that hard work back in 1962. Those who have developed both technically and from a procedural and from a skill point of view since that time.

Everyday in 2009, photographs that we take at various wavelengths, that we call GEOINT, will contribute immeasurably to understanding the threats that we now face, the opportunities that have and will provide both those who are making policy and those who are taking the action in the field with a means to do the right thing.

So this is what our job is really in intelligence; with geospatial intelligence playing a strong role, and I do want to mention again that for all of the high technology, gadgetry that we have, the amazing advances that we've made in terms of handling information, in terms of the precision of our systems, in terms of the volume of what we can collect, it really boils down to the people who are doing it, the men and women in the Intelligence Community who do that job.

For my mind, they're up there with that special class of patriots that we talk about every day, whether they be members of the armed forces, first responders, policeman, firefighters; and it is my hope and my expectation that someday they will be recognized, that we can demystify our profession a bit so they get that same public respect that we accord to those who are putting it on the line for the country everyday.

So that is what we're up to in the intelligence enterprise, and that is some of what our strategy is, and that is what geospatial intelligence fits into it in certain ways. We look forward to going on to new places in the future. We really value the partnership of those of you – our partners in the private community and certainly fora like this in which we can exchange ideas.

Looks like we have a little bit of time to turn this monologue into a dialogue, and so let me stop there and Mark, take a few questions. Thank you. (Applause.)

DR. LOWENTHAL: Thank you, Mr. Blair. As you can imagine, we have a couple of dozen questions, so I will go through. If the President and the Hill leadership were to say, "Director, what is the one thing we can solve for you? We can only do one right now, what would that one thing be?"

DIRECTOR BLAIR: I'm sorry the one thing that we can –

DR. LOWENTHAL: Can solve for you, your top most priority, we want to fix it, whatever it is. What would it be? Tough question.

DIRECTOR BLAIR: Well, I look on my job more as solving their problems than on them solving mine. But I think if I could wave my magic wand once, it would really be to advance this process of integration in the Intelligence Community that started, you know, five years ago with the IRTPA of which the DNI is a part. I've seen this process in other places, the Goldwater-Nichols Act really forced the armed forces to integrate in a way that they hadn't before. But it takes a while.

I'd like to fast-forward that so that this realization that we are greater than the sum of our parts. If we're integrated, a natural tendency to pull a team together and get the job done could get it and then we would, I think, be able to do better things for the country.

DR. LOWENTHAL: All right, there is a whole bunch of questions I'm going to conflate because they are all about the same issue. I know this was an issue that bedeviled your predecessor. How do we improve information sharing and overcome the security barriers while not jettisoning necessary security? So just square that circle you know. How do we deal with that conflict, especially as we keep pushing people to share more and more information?

DIRECTOR BLAIR: I think this one is a good news story, because technology is really our friend here. The previous way that we shared information while still trying to preserve security was to cut down trees, turn them into paper, write secrets on them and then take them in pouches and walk them over to other people and have them sign memos; and the fewer pieces of paper you handed out, the more secure you were and that was kind of how the deal worked.

We are committed to electronically sharing, and with the volumes that we are talking about, I think that we can push a lot more intelligence to people who have a need to know than we can ever been able to before. And just as importantly, because the attribution that is inherent in big distribution systems like this, we can actually be safer against the misuse or the loss of that intelligence than were before.

I'll give you an example of it. We have a new application that has spread like wildfire in the Intelligence Community called A-Space. Analytic Space, in which analysts can collaborate from sort of a voluntary self-identification basis rather than being put on a list.

When A-Space was started, there were certain kinds of information that were restricted from going out on it. And as has happened, some information that wasn't supposed to be A-Space got out. We were immediately able to tell exactly what information got out, who it went to, go retrieve it, take the proper security precautions, and reset the system.

So I think that this kind of electronic sharing is going to enable us to have rules that get the job done and still push information out. So I think the main problems now are not so much – a combination of getting these systems hooked up and then writing these rules, so I'm optimistic.

DR. LOWENTHAL: You are responsible for the National Intelligence Program – the NIP – what would be your major priorities for future investments?

DIRECTOR BLAIR: As I mentioned in my remarks, I think balance is important. When you look at the intelligence priorities we know about, it is clear that we have to push the different forms of intelligence all together. You'll hear statements like, well SIGINT is becoming dominant and everybody is going to be Internet and therefore all we need to do is to be able – all we have to do is pull information on the Internet.

My experience is not – that is not how it works. We need the major “ints” and some that we haven't even heard of yet to solve the tough problems. So I think we have to keep balanced. I think we have to keep a margin for future possibilities coming along. I know Bruce Carlson talked to you earlier.

And he is wrestling every day, as is Gen. Alexander at NSA, to make sure that we renew the systems that we know are really good mainline systems; that we keep resources available so that when the things that we can't know will be valuable come online prove their worth, we can fund them and get them in the system quickly. So I don't think there are any dramatic solutions to say that the answer is system X, I think it is going to be a series of agonizing balance questions that we make over the years.

DR. LOWENTHAL: Thank you, we are again, unfortunately out of time. Mr. Director, thank you so much for spending time with us we appreciate it. (Applause.) Thank you.

(END)



Director of National Intelligence Dennis C. Blair addresses the 2009 GEOINT Symposium in San Antonio, Texas.