

DIRECTOR OF NATIONAL INTELLIGENCE
WASHINGTON, DC 20511

February 16, 2010

The following message by Director of National Intelligence Dennis C. Blair was sent to employees of the United States Intelligence Community regarding the observance of Black History Month:

Colleagues:

This month we celebrate the many contributions of Black Americans to our nation, including those who have served and are serving in the Intelligence Community (IC). As we explore the history and culture of Black Americans, we also discover the triumph of leaders, predecessors, colleagues, and friends who have made notable accomplishments along a path marked by civil rights challenges.

Dallas C. Brown, Jr. was a Black American U.S. Army Military Intelligence (MI) leader of distinction. As a Colonel, he commanded Field Station Berlin, one of the premier Cold War Signals Intelligence centers. He was subsequently promoted to Brigadier General in 1978, becoming the first Black American in MI to reach that rank.

Dr. Ralph Johnson Bunche, an accomplished, greatly admired and respected diplomat, civil rights advocate, and educator, served for three years, from 1941 through 1944, in the initial months of the Office of the Coordinator of Information (COI). The COI became the Office of Strategic Services (OSS) – the precursor to the Central Intelligence Agency. Dr. Bunche, an assistant professor at Harvard, was hand picked by COI personnel to become a special analyst focused on the British Empire territories' African affairs. He assessed early on what was in store for Africa – the emergence and intensification of African nationalism, a “force to be reckoned with,” and the expulsion of colonial powers. In 1944, he moved to the State Department, where he became a highly effective, widely respected, and prominent U.S. and United Nations diplomat.

In U.S. history, Black Americans have fought in every war, and recognition of their sacrifice and courage was delayed until recent years. Our most recent Black American heroes, who made the ultimate sacrifice in support of the IC mission, will be recognized with etched stars on the Memorial Wall at the Central Intelligence Agency.

Our current President, Barack Obama, exemplifies the strides made by Black Americans. His legacy as our nation's first Black President is celebrated along with the legacies of other Black Americans who were firsts in their fields – Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., Frederick Douglas, Colin Powell, Condoleezza Rice, Oprah Winfrey, Rosa Parks, Maya Angelou, Ray Charles, Muhammad Ali, Bill Cosby, and many more.

In celebrating Black History Month, we recognize the diverse perspectives of Black Americans and embrace their rich cultural, educational, social, and political contributions, which are essential to our success in advancing the IC mission.

Dennis C. Blair