

**Op-Ed – The Washington Post
September 10, 2006; B07**

**Yes, We Are Better Prepared
By John D. Negroponte**

Surprise is what intelligence is intended to prevent, but on Sept. 11, 2001, our nation was surprised, and the results were tragic. Now the fifth anniversary of those horrific events raises anew the question: Is our nation's intelligence community better prepared to keep America safe? The answer is yes. U.S. intelligence has made major advances since that Sept. 11.

First and foremost, we better understand, and are aligned to meet, the threat of transnational terror. Although our enemy is constantly changing and remains deadly, our collectors and analysts are carefully tracking the evolution of al-Qaeda and its ideological allies. Today, we have several times as many "all source" analysts -- those who look at all types of intelligence -- focusing on the terrorist threat as were in place on Sept. 11. And as we build up analytic insight and expertise, we also are devoting resources to increased human intelligence collection on targets of primary concern. One important indicator of effectiveness: We and our partners have captured or killed a majority of the al-Qaeda leadership involved in planning and directing the Sept. 11 attacks.

Second, we know that intelligence does little good if those who need it don't see it. Over the past five years we have made great progress in breaking down information "stovepipes." The results are tangible.

Without good intelligence in the right hands, coalition forces in Iraq could not have located and killed Abu Musab al-Zarqawi, whose bloody attacks took so many Iraqi and coalition lives. More recently, British intelligence performed spectacularly in enabling British law enforcement to shut down last month's airline plot. All credit goes to the British, but U.S. and Pakistani intelligence-sharing -- among U.S. intelligence agencies and with the British -- supported their efforts.

These are concrete examples of how we have changed and are changing the way we do business. We continue to strengthen the National Counterterrorism Center, which integrates 28 intelligence networks. In addition, we have created the National Security Branch at the FBI, expanding and connecting the bureau's intelligence, counterterrorism and counterintelligence capabilities. In 2005 only a few hundred employees at the FBI had access to the National Counterterrorism Center's secret-level online information sources. Now that figure is in the thousands. At the same time, we are weaving state and regional fusion centers, as well as more than 100 FBI Joint Terrorism Task Forces, into a national network designed to ensure that actionable threat information gets where it needs to go in a timely fashion. Although sharing information between agencies and with allies is a demanding process, it is critical to countering transnational threats.

We are also more vigilant than ever concerning the threat posed by weapons of mass destruction in the hands of terrorists. We located the National Counterterrorism Center and the newly created National Counterproliferation Center together. We have worked closely with the FBI to establish

a WMD Division to ensure that our domestic counterterrorism efforts include expertise on weapons of mass destruction. And we created a "WMD Innovation Fund" for intelligence community analysis, collection, and science and technology projects.

Of course, we continue to improve our efforts against other, more traditional challenges. We have enhanced our focus on North Korea and Iran -- in particular those nations' WMD programs. North Korea's recent long-range missile launch tested the intelligence community's integration, and we ensured that military and civilian intelligence agencies, in concert with our international partners, provided policymakers with the intelligence they needed to fashion an appropriate diplomatic response.

That's good, but we can do even better. We know this because we have already completed an intelligence community-wide "lessons learned" review to see how we can improve. We will not allow ourselves to become complacent; every success affords us an opportunity to prepare better for the next challenge, which will surely come.

In the decades leading up to Sept. 11, America's intelligence community was configured to focus on the major threats presented by the Cold War. We now live in a different era, challenged by a radically different set of threats that have crossed our borders.

Both the Sept. 11 commission and the Robb-Silberman WMD commission accurately and eloquently detailed these new challenges. These commissions also offered a vision for 21st-century intelligence that we have fully embraced. We are "connecting the dots" both nationally and internationally, integrating counterterrorism analysis across the intelligence community, and removing bureaucratic barriers to information-sharing. This is a tall order. But the American people should understand that the components of the nation's intelligence community are working together in ways that were almost unimaginable before Sept. 11.

Through a new focus and better techniques, U.S. intelligence is collecting more information, analyzing it more rigorously and sharing it more broadly. Intelligence is not a panacea, but there are ways to ensure that the intelligence contribution to national security gets stronger, helping thwart our adversaries before they bring us more harm.

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