

**Remarks and Q&A by the Deputy Director of National Intelligence
For Analysis & Chairman, National Intelligence Council**

Dr. Thomas Fingar

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ELIOT JARDINES: I'm very pleased to introduce our next keynote speaker, who has spent a great deal of time in the media these days dealing with one National Intelligence Estimate or another. Given the news this morning, we are all the more appreciative of your willingness to join us this afternoon.

In May 2005, Dr. Tom Fingar was appointed the first Deputy Director of National Intelligence for Analysis and Chairman of the National Intelligence Council. Prior to joining the Office of the Director of National Intelligence, he served in numerous senior-level positions with the State Department, culminating in his previous position as Assistant Secretary of the State Department's Bureau of Intelligence and Research.

His intelligence career began in 1970 as a senior German linguist in the Office of the Deputy Chief of Staff for Intelligence, U.S. Army, Europe. Between 1975 and 1986, he held a number of positions at Stanford University, including Senior Research Associate in the Center for International Security and Arms Control. Other previous positions include assignments to the National Academy of Sciences, as co-director of the U.S.-China Education Clearinghouse, advisory to the Congressional Office of Technology Assessment, and consultant to numerous U.S. government agencies and private sector organizations.

From the moment I arrived on the DNI staff, Dr. Fingar has been a strong supporter of our open source efforts and a key ally in making open source the source of first resort. Please join me in welcoming Dr. Fingar. Thank you very much. (Applause.)

DR. TOM FINGAR: Thank you, Eliot, and thank you all for your interest in the open source program of the last two days, the true diehards who are still here at the end of the two-day session. I'm delighted to have the chance to speak at you for a few moments but ever more interested in responding to your questions, and if this goes as planned, there will be ample time to do that.

For me, the use of open source is not one of those things that the WMD commission or the IRPA or others told us to do. It's not in the nice-to-do category. It's absolutely essential. And I think of it as being essential in two regards. One is as a source of information, source of insight, and secondly, it is a way of reaching out to experts outside of the intelligence community, outside of the U.S. government, and indeed, outside of the United States.

Let me explain in very brief compass how I've come to that position. In part, it has to do with the nature of the challenge that we have been given, that analysis today, analysis and support of the wide range of customers and constituencies that we have, is a lot more difficult and a lot more varied, a lot more demanding than it was for the halcyon days of the Cold War. By halcyon, I mean not times were better but it was really pretty easy to be an analyst.

Question about most countries were, are they on the Soviet side or on our side? If they're on our side, what do we have to do to keep them there? If they're on their side, what do we have to do to pry them away? And we didn't ask very many more sophisticated or complex questions. Acknowledging that that's an – (unintelligible) – simplification, I think you will immediately recognize the contrast with today, where the number of countries of interest of concern for reasons that have more to do with internal politics and economic development and globalization and ask for insight on cleavages that are more than political – might be tribal, ethnic, religious or others – questions about local-level politics and how that affects trans-border activities. It's a very, very long list; I think you see where I'm going without adding more examples.

In order to answer these questions, we have to know more. More to the point, in order to answer them at the speed with which decisions are made, whether those decisions are policy making here in Washington, military commanders deployed around the world and now, law enforcement officers and other first responders around the country, they need the answer 10 minutes ago, or if it's a hard problem, we get 15. Unless we can provide answers in a very timely fashion, we're not very helpful because the decisions are going to be made whether or not we have made input or not.

Now most of the time, it's not measured in minutes, but it is very often measured in days, and in order to gain the expertise that we need on the myriad complex subjects that we address, the most important source or sources are those we call open source. Now only the intelligence community could come up with sort of a name and call it open source intelligence as opposed to information. (Laughter.) If you call it information, you don't get any money. If you call it open sources, somebody will want to fund that.

But most of the information that we need, not just for baseline understanding about places and people and problems around the world, but the deeper knowledge that is necessary to provide real insight, deeper understanding to the people we support, many of whom are very knowledgeable about the subjects for which they are responsible. We need to come in in a way that tells them something they didn't know, recognizing that we most of the time won't get credit. It will be internalized, thank you very much, I knew that anyway, but I'm glad you sort of reminded me of it. Whether that's true or not doesn't matter. If we are providing new information – one of my former colleagues, boss, Carl Ford, called it new knowledge – or if we are simply reinforcing or tweaking understanding that people already had, we're being helpful.

It's more, though, than going out and Googling the Internet. It's a lot more than digesting the information that dribbles into an electronic inbox because of a profile that has been set up to capture information on a particular range of subjects. It's a lot more than checking a Wiki entry. How is it more? Well, I spent 21 years on campuses before I decided to do a temporary stint back in government 22 years ago, and one of the things that I learned that has

stuck with me was that people regarded me as a specialist, if not an expert of sorts, on a range of subjects, which I covered completely using unclassified materials. There are subjects where classified information is critical, but that's not true of most subjects, and on the vast majority, you can get a long way up the knowledge curve using what's readily available.

I learned very early on, though, that the efficient way to go after information was not to troll the card catalog and stroll through the stacks. It was to go to the research librarians, and as I think about our – ahh, we've got some! (Applause and laughter.) Thank you for what you do. (Laughter.) In conversations that I've had with Eliot over the years, as I think about the open source enterprise, a part of it should be the provision of expert guidance to analysts, so if you're interested in this subject, look here or come back in an hour and I'll point you in the right direction. That would be the maintainers of the wisdom about the nature of sources. Those particular publications reflect a particular political perspective, or that body of information has been discredited by subsequent research, or whatever it is.

We need to, as we develop our open source capabilities, not simply have a great big vacuum cleaner that sucks in information from everywhere, but we need to be very smart about how we utilize the information. A portion of it is structuring our open source endeavor in ways that there are knowledgeable human beings that can preclude the need from everybody reinventing the wheel every time they embark upon a project.

Other parts of this, though, have to be machines, machines that are capable of organizing, ordering, linking in one way or another information. A lot of this is done routinely in the open source world. As part of our analytic transformation effort, we're trying to bring some of that capability into the classified world and indeed, expanding the capacity to mix and mingle open source and classified information. This turns out to be tricky but not difficult. We can talk about why I characterize it in that way if you wish. The goals here, for me, are making accessibility of open source information, in written form, in digital form and in human form, both easier and a normal way of doing business.

A couple of illustrative examples of why I think that's important. One has to do with the nature of our analytic workforce, very, very talented people, half of whom have less than five years experience. Most of them were trained by very able faculty members, corporate mentors, military superiors, wherever they happened to get the preparation. While it is essential to assist and utilize the talents and the knowledge of our junior workforce, I'd like to get at the people who taught them. They should naturally go to the people with whom they are familiar.

We hold a lot of conferences. I think I see Ken Roberts out in the audience who handles the open source outreach program for me. We do hundreds of conferences, thousands of outside experts every year. Admonition at every one of these that I attend is, make sure that the connections live on after the session. Exchange email addresses. Exchange phone numbers. Be in contact. Give as well as receive. This should not be the analytic community of the U.S. government is only in a take mode. You have to know something in order to get in a discussion with people who are knowledgeable and worth talking to.

We need to do this all the time because it'll make us smarter, it'll make us better prepared to provide the prompt answers to the difficult questions we are asked, it'll increase our individual and collective depth of knowledge, but just as importantly, we would be like the fire brigade that will have, to continue the metaphor, fire extinguisher accounts that may not be active for a long time. Suddenly, there is a natural disaster. There is a humanitarian emergency. There is an internal conflict. There's a flow of refugees across the border. There's an attack. Whatever it happens to be, where the requirement for understanding escalates very rapidly and unless we have exercised the capabilities of checking out the right websites and other publications, of being in touch with expertise in the university world, the NGO world, the media world, the business community, outside of the United States, if that's appropriate to the topic, we will spend so much time during the search phase that we will come in too late to be helpful. The American taxpayer spends too much money for us to be a day late, a dollar short, producing material more appropriate to line bird cages than influence decision making.

Even more to the point, the people that we support are already well plugged in to the open source world. They read newspapers and journals. They have favorite scholars. They have people in the business world who report to them on what they've experienced on a trip abroad or in a negotiation somewhere in the United States. They're getting information from sources that we may not have access to but we should know about. We should be as well-connected as they are and be able to move with the same nimbleness and alacrity of those that we support.

In order to do this, we've got to change some rules, we've got to change some culture, and most of all, we have to make clear that this is a prerequisite for success in our business. To be a good analyst, it's no longer possible to simply rely on classified information. It's not good enough. And even more to the point, there would be very little rationale for spending a lot of money and taking any risk to acquire something that you can get for free. And it's better than free. It's easily validated. You can go back and talk to the person who wrote the article. You can call them up or send them an email. You can ask somebody in an embassy to go look up the author. You can call your friend who happens to know who it was that gave a radio broadcast or spoke on television.

There is the opportunity for continuous or near-continuous interchange around the subject among interested specialists, and widening the circle of experts with whom each one of our analysts interacts and facilitating the interchange among analysts where it's perfectly fine to try out ideas, where we're not interested in scooping one another. One of the perpetual frustrations of my intelligence career was the mentality in which many seemed to be the first one to be wrong, that being out there in a hurry to scoop somebody else on issues where the United States government might do or refrain from taking action strikes me as irresponsible, and a part of the responsible approach to an analytic enterprise, it seems to me, is utilizing the best information available and consulting with the best experts available and capturing sort of information on who was useful for what purpose, what kind of sources are more or less helpful on what issues, and passing that on. It shouldn't be a prerogative and the preserve of the individual; it should become part of corporate knowledge. And that knowledge base should be available, not just inside of the intelligence community but to everybody who's working on the problem.

To describe it in those terms is Pollyannaish in the extreme, that the need to protect secrets on certain how-do-I-know-that, I only know it because I saw it on my classified computer. Yeah, but it's a baseball score. It may have been in that computer, but it probably wasn't classified. We need – that sounds silly, right? Talk to some of the people that work for me and see why it is that they will footnote China is a large country with a large population – (laughter) – according to the IMF. There are things that we know. There are things that you know. There are things that are critically important even though they're widely known and easily knowable.

We have to do everything we can to make it easy, natural, normal, required and rewarded to make use of that information. And I'm now going to open up to questions, and even better, suggestions from you on how I can make this happen. The floor is yours. It's hard to see hands, if those –

Q: Yes, Ken Gause from the CNA Corporation. You talk about this kind of give and take and reaching out and identifying sources in the open source community, but what about people and institutions and businesses that are in the private sector that want to provide information but have no point of contact within the intelligence community? How do you get that push going so that it is not only just a pull system but a push-pull system?

DR. FINGAR: Two levels of the question. Now, one is those who want to engage as corporate providers of a service, vendors who wish to provide information on a subject that, as we become more adept in harnessing open source information, taking advantage of opportunities in the commercial world to bundle, screen, package and do some of the things that shortens the search process and adds value, it must be a natural part of it, and that's a question, I'm sure Eliot is listening off stage, that needs to be addressed by ODNI. We clearly need a mechanism.

I don't think it's too much of an exaggeration to say we are still so close to the startup mode that there has been a, to me, very appropriate reticence to be overwhelmed by help before we have the structure, the capacity, the procedures for taking advantage of that help.

The second are people who are knowledgeable that happen to work in the corporate world or the think tank world and believe they have something to offer. They're excited – they just had a trip, they just wrote an article, they just had an idea. Or they have a question. We need to make it easier to reach, and you've given me an incentive to devise a way on our various websites for people to get into us one point of contact, and we'll figure out how to redirect that. The point is well taken. We may be making it easier for us to find you. We've got to also make it easier for you to find us.

Down front here, or am I breaking the rules? Do you ladies decide who gets to ask a question? (Laughter.)

Q: Thank you. Lawrence Wright with The New Yorker. I want to refer to the National Intelligence Estimate that came out today, and I was at the press conference earlier. As I remember or understand from the press conference, this took three years to compile. Is that accurate? And then, why did such – why does it take so long – we're talking about speed of

decision making – to come up with what is essentially a non-controversial item that adds really very little to our understanding of al Qaeda? Anything – that anybody who follows that movement closely in the press would have come to the same conclusions. What value did you add in that report, for instance?

DR. FINGAR: At the press conference you apparently missed, the point that was made that it was requested in 2004 and rejected twice by me because of the quality of the work: old-style, new-style of doing these.

Part of the transformation that we have put in place – when I became chairman of the NIC, one of my other hats, the average gestation of an estimate was 480 days. It's now down to about 80. Partly it has to do with greater concision. Partly it has to do with a much more demanding set of requirements to check out the information. And NIEs or other products in my view will not be successful if they cause great surprise. We will not have been doing our job in terms of informing our customers on the Hill, in the administration, them informing the public, occasionally us informing the public directly about what our thinking is.

These ought to be much more stocktaking, reexamination of assumptions, scrutinizing of old information in light of things that we have learned subsequently, that it is not too much of a hyperbolic statement to say that if anybody who is a regular recipient of intelligence community analyses on any subject goes, I didn't know that, we have failed; we have failed along the way. By the time we get to the point of publishing one of these things, for the record, baseline further next time, we will have been sharing it around.

Now, let me push your question one another step, which is a more general proposition. As we are working on subjects – and I will not dispute anybody working in the press would have come to the same conclusions. I suspect you might have done it without the same level of confidence, or would be inappropriate to have had the same level of confidence, or without the number of sources that under-gird those judgments.

But people are working difficult subjects all of the time. And the insights that can come out of the media, the think tank, the trip of somebody who has gone there that is feeding into the understanding that policymakers and the public have about those issues must be a part of what we take in, not just because it's a source of information but because it is a part of the intellectual context in which our writing is going to be read, our briefings are going to be heard.

I'll close with an observation that one of the most difficult things I have discovered to do – mixing up my grammar here – very hard to do, is to disslaunch an erroneous description or understanding of a problem. Once you get a bad idea in somebody's head it's really hard to get it out. And when it comes from places outside of our analytic community, okay, we have to deal with it.

When it comes from inside the community because somebody was in a hurry to present a view that – oh, oh, oh, ooh! This is really exciting – and get it into the system, no matter how convincingly the argument is made, decisions have been taken; it forces people who have taken public stands or testified on the Hill to walk backward. That is hard. That puts an incredible

responsibility on us to be prudent in making the judgments to be clear in making the judgments and to be clear about why we would disagree with an impression that has already been conveyed in a respected authoritative vehicle in the open-source world.

Let me go over to this side. Is that a hand way in the back? Oh, over here.

Q: Hi. Pam Benson from CNN. A couple of NIE questions too.

In the report, you talk about the heightened threat environment. How has al Qaeda's capabilities changed in essence to conduct any type of operations in the past two or three years? And also, the report also talks about al Qaeda might leverage context and capabilities with al Qaeda Iraq. Exactly what are you talking about?

DR. FINGAR: I'm not going to go beyond what we have said in the portion that we have released, but I can within that context address the first question. How the capabilities have changed in the last two years I think was your timeframe, Pam. The safe haven, the ability to operate along that Pakistan-Afghanistan border, and to restore modes of communication with operatives, with affiliates, with wannabes who are outside of that safe haven – that has given al Qaeda a great capability than it had a few years ago in that regard.

The context of course is al Qaeda has been weakened, central command has been weakened through the vigorous efforts of the United States and our allies in the war on terror.

How might al Qaeda central sort of leverage al Qaeda in Iraq? This is a question that properly should have many, many answers depending on what the assumptions are. Let me just use two. That there are a lot of insurgents, affiliates, members of al Qaeda in Iraq who are gaining concrete, on-the-ground experience in everything from covert communication with one another to smuggling to preparation of IEDs to understanding of American tactics, understanding of Iraqi tactics. That knowledge is portable. Those people can move.

We judge, as the estimate indicated, that the majority of effort by AQI, al Qaeda in Iraq, is devoted to the struggle inside of Iraq, to attacking Shi'a, to attacking the coalition. There is nothing assured about that; that is not necessarily for everything. They have capabilities that they could use.

The other is that al Qaeda in Iraq has publicly claimed its intention to attack the United States here. One could say, well, that is just a boast; it's an idol boast. Well, it stands out because other than al Qaeda – the only terrorist organization I know to have done that. So we shouldn't simply dismiss it as an idol boast – and clearly have the ability to move people. One can easily imagine scenarios in which they would think they had an incentive to take action.

Q: I have question about OSINT – about OSINT, open sourcing. You said that all analysts need to be able to use open-source intelligence. Are you working with the agencies to provide training and use of open-source intelligence to new analysts, and also to train analysts with more experience?

DR. FINGAR: We have a course, open-source 101 that is new. We are building it into the analysis 101 program. It's ODNI sponsored, but the key here is within the individual programs of the agencies. Some make very extensive use of open source and have for a long time. We need to make it easier. We have some that say it's good to use open sources but don't cite them. People won't believe them. If we haven't paid for it or stolen it, it's not the same credible information. (Laughter.) I think that is kind of silly, and yet it's part of the reality.

We do have to train. The open-source center and the open-source program activities needs to be the source of expertise. We need to have people in every agencies who are relatively more expert in the use of open sources, the functional equivalent of the research librarian that people can go to. We need to rotate people around through jobs when they go back. This will be increasingly easy, not simply because we'll get better at it but because, again, this younger workforce that approaches – not, can I use open sources, but why don't you make it easier for me? Why can't I do at work what I can do at home? Why can I easily latch up with my grad school classmate who is now living and working in Poland and provides information on the situation there? That is rules; we made the rules; we have to change the rules, and in some cases, we have to change the hardware. You coming in with the hook? (Laughter.)

Thank you all for the questions and the interest.

(Applause.)

MR. JARDINES: Dr. Fingar, thank you very much for your excellent remarks today, and just a small token of our appreciation for coming out today.

DR. FINGAR: Thank you. Open-source in a box. (Laughter, applause.)

MR. JARDINES: We'll conclude with Mary Margaret's remarks in just a minute. We are going to let some folks in. So one minute and we'll get started. Thank you.

(End of session.)