



**Remarks by the Director of National Intelligence  
Mr. Dennis C. Blair**

**Galileo Awards Ceremony**

**ODNI Headquarters  
McLean, Virginia**

**May 20, 2009**

---

DIRECTOR BLAIR: Good morning. It's great to be here today. Taking time out to celebrate and reward creativity and innovation is a real pleasure.

Thank you for joining me today to honor the three winners and seven other finalists of the fifth annual Galileo Awards Competition.

I'd like to add a special welcome to their supervisors who are with us today. And I'd also like to thank our Senior Panel Judges.

Everyone knows something about Galileo – if nothing else, as a lyric in the Queen song, “Bohemian Rhapsody.” You head-bangers in the audience, if you know what I'm talking about, bob your heads up and down.

For the rest of you who are a little less contemporary, Galileo was the Renaissance scientist who proved empirically that the Sun – not the Earth – was the center of the known universe.

It's too bad he's still not around in some modern version to prove Washington is not the center of the universe.

And despite being called both a hero and a heretic in his lifetime, Galileo had the satisfaction of seeing his ideas make a big difference.

About a hundred years later, another brilliant inventor named Sir Isaac Newton said, “If I have seen further, it is by standing upon the shoulders of giants.” Of course, Galileo was one of his giants, and Newton credited him because he understood that each of us builds on the knowledge and experience of those who come before.

So it's fitting that today's awards are named for Galileo – an inspiration to many others. Because likewise, through this competition, you're inspiring the thinking of many others. Your ideas are building blocks for future success. And it's on your shoulders that tomorrow's intelligence officers will stand.

Our Galileo program is designed to recognize the central role our highly talented officers play in shaping the future of U.S. Intelligence, through their innovative ideas and hard work.

As we all know, it's a dynamic, networked global environment that we face today. The pace, scale and complexity of change in the world is unprecedented, and increasing all the time. But we have a national imperative. We have to work to create an integrated global enterprise that can anticipate and respond to rapidly changing threats. Innovation has never been more important.

And keeping the Intelligence Community on the cutting edge of innovation is a critical priority for all of us.

If we give our intelligence professionals the right missions, and clear away the obstacles in front of them, those of us who have faith in them will also have the pleasure and privilege of watching them produce amazing results.

This morning we get to recognize three winning papers. I've read the abstracts, but I have a trip coming up soon, I look forward to reading the full papers then.

Seven other papers received honorable mentions – including, for the first time, a paper by two FBI officers. That's an important trend toward participation and collaborative thinking, from all corners of our Intelligence Community.

I look forward to hearing the winning authors present their abstracts in a few moments. But before we turn to their remarks, I want to say how impressed I also am at the breadth and depth of submissions and participants in the Galileo competition. We're really just seeing the tip of the iceberg. More than 50 initial submissions came from 14 different agencies. Papers were from individuals and teams, from junior officers and seasoned professionals. And they were from those who serve all over the world.

The topics of their innovative thinking ranged from the core of disciplines – operations, collection, and analysis – to information handling, security and management – all the things that help tie us together.

The great diversity of issues they raised, and the solutions they offered, have given us a strong foundation for further discussion. And more importantly, action.

While this competition was no doubt stimulating, this ceremony is certainly worthwhile, it's really just the start of the process. At the heart of the Galileo program is the hope that we'll light a spark for continuous, vibrant debate within our Community about practical ways to do our job better, and to lead to action.

We know that the Intelligence Community isn't really about wiring diagrams, new titles, and reorganized chairs. Instead, it's about finding the best people and the best ideas for overcoming the tough problems.

Galileo himself said, “All truths are easy to understand once they are discovered. The point is to discover them.” That’s simple, but profound. Your bringing forth of ideas helps us to understand.

So get the word out! If people have good ideas, don’t be shy about pushing them forward, they need to get over it. This is their chance. Galileo 2009 is coming soon!

To the winners and finalists honored here today, I believe you already understand that innovation and excellence are the way ahead. I have confidence that you’ll be the leaders in our community who can set the example that points others in the right direction, and do things better in the future.

Congratulations again to all, and thank you for your very fine work. It’s been a great pleasure to be here today to pay homage to you.