

Opening Statement of
Ranking Member Senator Susan M. Collins

“The Lessons and Implications of the Christmas Day Attack: Intelligence Reform and Interagency Integration”

Committee on Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs
March 17, 2010

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Over the past three months, this Committee has examined the intelligence failures surrounding the attempted terrorist attack on Christmas Day. As a part of our due diligence, we also have evaluated the impact of the Intelligence Reform and Terrorism Prevention Act of 2004.

Today, we focus anew on one of the most significant issues that we grappled with in drafting the Intelligence Reform law: the extent of the authority for the Office of the Director of National Intelligence.

The DNI was established to be, in Colin Powell’s memorable words, the “quarterback” of the intelligence community, to coordinate the activities of the 16 intelligence agencies scattered across the federal government. Those 16 diverse components carry out an array of missions, each with its own view about how best to carry out its assignment.

The intelligence community is resistant to change, but change is precisely what the Intelligence Reform Act directed the DNI to achieve. To that end, we provided a set of authorities that the DNI would use as tools to encourage, cajole, and, in some cases, compel action.

These authorities included:

- The ability to access all intelligence information collected by the federal government.
- The lead role in developing the annual National Intelligence Program budget and ensuring its effective execution.
- Some ability to transfer funds and personnel within the Intelligence Community.
- The ability to manage and direct the tasking, collection, analysis, production, and dissemination of intelligence.
- The authority to develop standards and guidelines to ensure maximum availability of intelligence information within the Intelligence Community.

These authorities should be sufficient for the DNI to accomplish its mission - provided they are wielded effectively and with the strong support of the President. As Governor Kean and Representative Hamilton testified before this Committee in January, "The DNI's ability to lead the Intelligence Community depends on the President defining its role and giving him the power and authority to act."

The question is, however, whether or not these authorities have been used as often and in the manner intended by this Congress.

Does the institutional resistance of agencies like the CIA make use of these authorities such an onerous ordeal that the DNI is hesitant to embark upon this journey?

Is the DNI concerned that exercising these authorities more aggressively might create ill will that will make it even more difficult to coordinate activities in other areas?

Or, are these authorities being undercut by insufficient support from the President or the National Security Council, both of which need to be active to ensure that the DNI works as intended?

Our witnesses today offer a wealth of practical experience in the day-to-day operations of the Intelligence Community both pre- and post-reform, and I hope that they can offer some insight into these questions.

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