



United States Senate

Committee on Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs

Chairman Joseph I. Lieberman, ID-Conn.

Opening Statement of Chairman Joseph Lieberman
“Ten Years After 9/11: Is Intelligence Reform Working, Part II?”
Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs Committee
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As Prepared for Delivery

Good afternoon. Today we hold our second hearing on the topic: “Ten Years After 9/11: Is Intelligence Reform Working?” as part of our overall series of hearings this year on how well the security reforms enacted after 9-11 have protected our homeland security.

During our hearing last week, we explored a variety of issues related to intelligence reform. In contrast, this hearing will focus on a single big question – does the Director of National Intelligence have the authorities needed to lead our sprawling intelligence establishment?

I want to welcome our witness, former Director of National Intelligence Dennis Blair.

Admiral Blair is an extraordinarily talented and dedicated public servant who had an exemplary career as a senior military commander and a consumer of intelligence before agreeing to take on what we all know to be one of Washington’s most challenging jobs – the DNI.

You are, of course, uniquely qualified to help us explore this issue.

I am grateful that you accepted Senator Collins's and my invitation to come and share your thoughts. Your testimony is in keeping with your career of national service and reflecting your extensive experience in national security matters.

We take your presence here today in that context. So thank you for appearing before this committee today and sharing insights into a subject you know well.

This Committee created the DNI as part of the Intelligence Reform and Terrorism Prevention Act of 2004 at the recommendation of the 9-11 Commission.

The Commission concluded that no one was in charge of the U.S. Intelligence Community and that this lack of leadership resulted in broad dysfunction and disunity that left us vulnerable to the 9-11 attacks.

The intelligence system that existed on 9-11 had been built to counter nation-states like the Soviet Union that had large bureaucracies and fielded massive armies of tanks, airplanes, and missiles that we sought to study and count.

Intelligence collection and analysis could move at a slower pace, with each intelligence agency operating in relative autonomy, and still be effective.

But terrorists and cybercriminals today operate at Internet speed. To fight them successfully, we needed to change our system so we could be as flexible and nimble as they are. And it was to be the DNI’s job to bring the necessary unity of command and effort to our 16 intelligence agencies, including the CIA.

So we ask: On a day-to-day basis, does the DNI have the authorities he or she needs to lead the Intelligence Community effectively? Does the DNI have the ability to forge the unity of effort across the community and achieve the level of integration that is necessary to meet the myriad of challenges that our nation faces?

These are the overarching questions we would like to pose today to Admiral Blair.

The intelligence reform legislation of 2004 gave the DNI authorities in critical areas including budget and personnel. Accordingly, we will ask your assessment of the DNI's use of these authorities.

For example, how often have DNIs been able use the DNI's budget authorities, and to what effect?

What impact have the DNI's personnel authorities had on the DNIs' ability to force greater integration of the Intelligence Community?

Are there gaps that DNIs have tried but failed to close due to a lack of some authorities? And are new authorities needed regarding budgets, personnel, or other areas?

Admiral Blair last testified before this committee in January 2010 in a hearing regarding the Christmas bomber, Farouk Abdulmutallab, who smuggled a bomb aboard Northwest Flight 253 that failed to detonate.

I remember being impressed that day that Admiral Blair and our other witnesses – Secretary of Homeland Security Janet Napolitano and National Counterterrorism Director Michael Leiter – all took their share of responsibility, admitted the system had failed, and told us that changes were already underway.

One of the questions I want to ask Admiral Blair today is if he was able to implement the changes he said were needed or if some of those gaps that allowed Abdulmutallab slip through the system still exist.

Let me close by saying that restructuring the government to meet new threats is hard and change comes slowly. When we passed the Intelligence Reform Act, we knew we would have to revisit the legislation to determine whether it needed to be improved in light of the evolution of the terrorist threat and other challenges facing our nation.

That's why we're here today.

Sen. Collins.