



**Remarks as delivered by
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**Worldwide Threat Assessment to the
House Permanent Select Committee on Intelligence**

**Tuesday, February 4, 2014, 10 a.m. EST
The Capitol, HVC-210
Washington, D.C.**

Chairman Rogers, Ranking Member Ruppertsberger, and distinguished members of the committee.

My colleagues and I are here today to present the Intelligence Community's worldwide threat assessment, as we do every year, although I must commend Ranking Member Ruppertsberger for his outstanding rendition of the threat briefing.

I'll cover about five topics -- five topics in about 10 minutes on behalf of all of us. As DNI, this is my fourth appearance before the committee to discuss the threats we face.

I've made this next assertion previously, but it is, if anything, even more evident and relevant today. Looking back over my more than half a century in intelligence, I've not experienced a time when we have been beset by more crises and threats around the globe.

My list is long.

It includes the scourge and diversification of terrorism, loosely connected and globally dispersed, to include here at home, as exemplified by the Boston Marathon bombing; the sectarian war in Syria, its attraction as a growing center of radical extremism and the potential threat this poses to the homeland.

Let me briefly expand on this point. The strength of the insurgency in Syria is now estimated at somewhere between 75 or 80,000 or up to 110 to 115,000 insurgents, who are organized into more than 1,500 groups of widely varying political leanings.

Three of the most effective are the Al-Nusrah Front, Ansar Al-Sham, and the Islamic State of Iraq in the Levant, or ISIL, as it's known, who total about 26,000 insurgents.

Complicating this further are the 7,500 or so foreign fighters from some 50 countries who have gravitated to Syria. Among them are a small group of Af-Pak Al Qaida veterans who have the aspirations for external attack in Europe, if not the homeland.

And there are many other crises and threats around the globe, to include the spillover of the Syria conflict into neighboring Lebanon and Iraq; the destabilizing flood of refugees in Jordan, Turkey and Lebanon, now about 2.5 million people, a symptom of one of the largest humanitarian disasters in a decade; the implications of the drawdown in Afghanistan; the deteriorating internal security posture in Iraq, with AQI now in control of Fallujah; the growth of foreign cyber capabilities, nation-states and non-nation-states as well; the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction; aggressive nation-state intelligence efforts

against us; an assertive Russia; a competitive China; a dangerous, unpredictable North Korea; a challenging Iran; lingering ethnic divisions in the Balkans; perpetual conflict and extremism in Africa, in Mali, Nigeria, the Central African Republic, and in South Sudan; violent political struggles in, among others, the Ukraine, Burma, Thailand, and Bangladesh; the specter of mass atrocities; the increasing stress of burgeoning populations; the urgent demands for energy, water and food; the increasing sophistication of transnational crime; the tragedy and magnitude of human trafficking; the insidious rot of invented synthetic drugs; potential for pandemic diseases occasioned by the growth of drug resistant bacteria.

I could go on with this litany, but suffice to say that we live in a complex, dangerous world.

The statements for the record that we've submitted, particularly the classified version, provide a comprehensive review of these and other daunting challenges.

My second topic is what has consumed extraordinary time and energy for much of the past year in the intelligence community, in the Congress, in the White House, and, of course, in the public square.

I'm speaking, of course, about potentially the most massive and most damaging theft of intelligence information in our history by Edward Snowden, and the ensuing avalanche of revelations published and broadcast around the world.

I won't dwell on the debate about Snowden's motives or his legal standing or on the supreme ironies occasioned by his choice of freedom-loving nations and beacons of free expression to which he fled and from which he rails about what an Orwellian state he thinks this country has become.

But what I do want to speak to, as the nation's senior intelligence officer, is the profound damage that his disclosures have caused and will continue to cause. And, as a consequence, in my view, this nation is less safe and its people less secure.

What Snowden has stolen and exposed has gone way, way beyond his professed concerns with so-called domestic surveillance programs. As a result, we've lost critical foreign intelligence collections sources, including some shared with us by valued partners.

Terrorists and other adversaries of this country are going to school on U.S. intelligence sources, methods and trade craft. And the insights that they are gaining are making our jobs much, much harder.

And this includes putting -- putting the lives of members or assets of the intelligence community at risk, as well as our armed forces, diplomats and our citizens.

We're beginning to see changes in the communications behavior of adversaries, particularly terrorists, a disturbing trend that I anticipate will continue.

Snowden, for his part, claims that he's won and that his mission is accomplished. If that's so, I call on him and his accomplices to facilitate the return of the remaining stolen documents that have not yet been exposed, to prevent even more damage to U.S. security.

As a third, and related point, I want to comment on the ensuing fallout. It pains me greatly that the National Security Agency and its magnificent workforce have been pilloried in public commentary.

I started in the intelligence profession over 50 years ago, in signal intelligence. Members of my family -- my father, father-in-law, brother-in-law and my wife and I - have all worked at NSA, so this is deeply personal to me and my family.

The real facts are, as the president noted in his speech on the 17th of January, that the men and women who work at NSA, both military and civilian, have done their utmost to protect this country and do so in a lawful manner.

As I and other leaders in the community have said many times, NSA's job is not to target the e-mails and phone calls of U.S. citizens. The agency does collect foreign intelligence, the whole reason that NSA has existed since 1952, performing critical missions that I'm sure the American people wanted to carry out.

Moreover, the effects of the unauthorized disclosures hurt the entire Intelligence Community, not just NSA. Critical intelligence capabilities in which the United States has invested billions of dollars are at risk or likely to be curtailed or eliminated either because of compromise or conscious decision.

Moreover, the impact of the losses caused by the disclosures will be amplified by the substantial budget cuts we're incurring.

The stark consequences of this perfect storm are plainly evident. The Intelligence Community is going to have less capacity to protect our nation and its allies than we've had.

In this connection, I am also compelled to note, as did Ranking Member Ruppertsberger, the negative morale impact this perfect storm has had on the I.C. workforce, which were compounded by sequestration, furloughs, the shutdown and salary freezes.

This leads me to my fourth point: We are thus faced collectively -- and by collectively I mean this committee, the Congress at large, the executive branch, and, most acutely, all of us in the intelligence community -- with the inescapable imperative to accept more risk. It's a plain hard fact and a circumstance that the community must, and will, manage, together with you and with those we support in the executive branch.

But if dealing with reduced capabilities is what we -- is needed to ensure the faith and confidence of the American people and their elected representatives, then we in the intelligence community will work as hard as we can to meet the expectations before us.

And that brings me to my fifth and final point: The major takeaway for us, and certainly for me from the past several months is that we must lean in the direction of transparency wherever and whenever we can. With greater transparency about these intelligence programs, the American people may be more likely to accept them.

The President set the tone and direction for us in a speech, as well in his landmark Presidential Policy Directive, a major hallmark of which is transparency.

I have specific tasking in conjunction with the Attorney General to conduct further declassification; to develop special protections under Section 702 of the Foreign Intelligence Surveillance Act, governing collection of non-U.S. persons overseas; to modify how we conduct bulk collection of telephone metadata under Section 215 of the PATRIOT Act; and to ensure more oversight of sensitive collection activities. Clearly we'll need your support in making these changes.

Through all of this, we must, and we will, sustain our professional trade craft and integrity. We must continue to protect our crown jewel sources and methods so that we can accomplish what we've always been chartered to do: to protect the lives of American citizens here and abroad from the a myriad of threats I described at the beginning of this statement.

With that, I'll conclude. And we're ready to address your questions.