



**Testimony before the  
Committee on Appropriations  
United States Senate**

**“9/11 COMMISSION RECOMMENDATIONS”**

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**A Statement by**

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Chairman Stevens, Ranking Member Senator Byrd, distinguished members of the Committee, it is an honor to again come before this distinguished committee to discuss one of the most important subjects of our day—how we organize the intelligence functions of the United States Government to meet the future challenges confronting our country. At the outset let me emphasize how grateful I am that you are making a dedicated study of this matter. America's security depends on a sophisticated and robust intelligence community. But Americans are nervous about their own government at times. We must have a government that can protect us, and we all want to insure we are protected from abuses by our government. That depends on the oversight of the people's branch of government, the United States Congress. I am very grateful you are assuming these responsibilities at this critical time.

Mr. Chairman, we are now very far along the road in this debate. Unfortunately, from my perspective, the shape of this debate has been driven more by political imperative than deep analysis of the challenges we face in this area. We do need intelligence reform, I believe. But I believe the debate to date, and the proposals before the Congress, are too narrowly constructed around one perceived failure of the intelligence community, and that is the failure to coordinate the activities of the components of the intelligence community.

Frankly, I believe that the so-called intelligence failure of 9-11 is overstated. I believe that 9-11 was just as much a failure of the policy community—the near uniform absence of consciousness of the specific threats we experienced on 9-11 by the policy world. Far more serious were the failings of the intelligence community that forecast massive stocks of chemical and biological weapons in Iraq. No place on earth was more scrutinized than Iraq during a period of a decade, yet we missed this story almost completely. Again, the policy community is not without blame. But this has to be considered a massive intelligence failure, too.

The recommendations of the 9-11 commission are almost entirely oriented around the issue of coordination. That was not the problem with the missing weapons of mass destruction in Iraq. Narrow “group think” plagued us in that instance, and I firmly believe that problem will be worsened by the recommendations of the 9-11 Commission.

### ***Do no harm***

Mr. Chairman, we are being propelled by the election to rush to pass legislation before you adjourn the 109<sup>th</sup> Congress. Elections are great times to hold debates, but terrible times for making binding decisions. The medical community has enshrined the principle of “do no harm” in the practice of medicine. I think that is good counsel to the Congress at this critical moment. In this regard, I think there are several key issues that I would bring to your attention.

### ***The politicization of intelligence***

The intelligence community is always seeking to serve the needs of the policy leaders. There is a fine line between “serving the needs” and “pleasing” the policy bosses. It is critical that the intelligence community not cross over that line. The 9-11 Commission completely breaks through that line. Putting the intelligence czar in the White House at the right hand of the president is a terrible idea.

By definition, the closer your office is to the Oval Office, the more political your activities. That is not a bad thing. That is a good thing. Politics is a constructive force in American government. But intelligence should not be part of the political life of the White House, and locating the DNI in the White House would invite the direct politicization of intelligence.

### ***Eroding the responsibilities of constitutional officers***

Making the intelligence czar the single focal point for intelligence inputs to the president and the cabinet is a terrible idea. Undercutting the cabinet secretaries who are constitutional officers of the government charged to manage the instruments of foreign and security policy for the country is a bad idea.

Through the 1970s, it was the practice of the National Security Council to have the Director of Central Intelligence attend the start of the meeting, brief the cabinet secretaries and other members of the Council on the facts, answer questions, and then depart the meeting so that the Council could deliberate the policy alternatives for the government. I believe that was the superior model. Current practice has the DCI participating throughout the deliberations. The 9-11 Commission would make the new DNI a super-agent in those meetings. This is a trend in the wrong direction.

Accountability for the policies and activities of the U.S. government flow from the president down through the constitutional officers of the government—the cabinet secretaries. They must be both free to decide and completely accountable for their decisions. I fear these recommendations would undercut their standing and their accountability.

### ***Confused command relationships***

The 9-11 Commission called for giving the DNI control over the budgets and personnel within the departments of other cabinet secretaries. I believe this is a bad idea. I served as Comptroller for the Defense Department and then as Deputy Secretary. I can tell you from personal experience that ambiguous command relationships invariably lead to serious substantive problems. The formulation of divided command authority envisioned by the Commission is an invitation to turmoil at best and most likely serious operational problems.

### ***So what should the Congress do?***

Mr. Chairman, distinguished members of the Committee, I have delineated the reservations I have about the 9-11 Commission recommendations. I know that there are competing bills now under consideration in the Congress. Some of those bills closely match the recommendations of the commission and some depart significantly from those recommendations. As I said, I am most worried that the Congress will feel propelled by the impending election to decide something. We did that when we created the Department of Homeland Security, and candidly that is a mess. The risks of making a serious mistake here are greater, I believe.

Yesterday, my think tank—the Center for Strategic and International Studies—released a short declaration of principles developed by a bipartisan and very distinguished group of former government leaders who have had exceptional and direct experience in foreign and security affairs for the United States. Those principles, which, I should add, reflect the collective opinion of the distinguished signatories rather than those of the Center, put forward a uniform message of caution. The declaration also contains useful suggestions to guide a more deliberative reform process. I would ask permission of the Chairman to have this declaration of principles included at this point in the record.

### ***Conclusion***

Mr. Chairman, we do need to reform our intelligence community. But we need that reform to be based on a dispassionate assessment of all the failings of the intelligence and policy communities, not just the coordination problem perceived to have been the cause of 9-11. Centralizing intelligence management to solve coordination problems will exacerbate the greater failings of the intelligence world, I believe. I strongly caution the Committee to take the time to fully assess all the problems we need to fix and ground a reform on a thorough, bipartisan foundation of representative government and government accountability.

Thank you for the privilege of testifying before you today. I am pleased to answer any questions you might have.