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NATIONAL COMMISSION ON TERRORIST ATTACKS UPON THE UNITED STATES

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Fourth public hearing of the National Commission on Terrorist Attacks Upon the United States

Statement of John C. Gannon to the National Commission on Terrorist Attacks Upon the United States October 14, 2003

Thank you for inviting me to testify before your commission on the subject of "Warning of Transnational Threats." You have an historic opportunity to help improve the performance of the US Intelligence Community and the broader US Government against terrorism and other transnational threats. I know you are committed to doing so. I want to help you in any way I can.

It is a special pleasure to be here on a panel with Dick Kerr and Mary McCarthy, who are my colleagues and friends of many years in the Intelligence Community. You could not have chosen two people more knowledgeable or experienced in the practice of intelligence, including the critical warning function. I have

Current News

The Commission has released its final report. [\[more\]](#)

The Chair and Vice Chair have released a statement regarding the Commission's closing. [\[more\]](#)

The Commission closed August 21, 2004. [\[more\]](#)

Commission Members

Thomas H. Kean
Chair

Lee H. Hamilton
Vice Chair

looked forward to their testimony.

I want to structure my written remarks, Mr. Chairman, in direct response to the nine questions you provided in your letter of invitation. Before I do that, however, let me briefly share with you my concept of warning, which, as I will explain, is a broad one affecting analytic tradecraft across the board. This is the view that I have applied in managing or developing analytic programs in senior intelligence positions, in the Homeland Security Transition Planning Office, and in my current job as the Staff Director of the Select Committee on Homeland Security.

Warning, strategic and tactical, has a long history and an ample literature in the US military and Intelligence Community. It has often been treated as a distinct discipline requiring specialized training, dedicated senior officers, staffs, inter- and intra- agency committees. It has spawned its own line of products including forecasts and watchlists. It has driven the development of leading-edge collection systems and sensors and it has incentivized the development of state-of-the-art analytic tools and methodologies. I do not, however, see warning as a distinct discipline or a unique function. I prefer to talk about it as one exponent of a model for expert analysis. All intelligence analysts today, whether on a traditional regional account or a crisis task force, face gaps in information, unresolved debates among experts about potential outcomes, and deadline pressures that work against intellectual rigor. Today's issues, including transnational threats like terrorism, demand that all our analysts, not just warning officers, systematically re-examine the assumptions of the analysis, consistently seek new information from both outside sources and clandestine collection, and routinely and thoroughly explore the range of alternative outcomes along with their implications for US policy. In a word, this is all about rigor, which

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Executive Director

Chris Kojm
*Deputy Executive
Director*

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should be the watchword for all Intelligence Community analysis.

With this broader perspective in mind, I will answer your nine questions:

(Question 1: What are the essential methods or principles that have been developed over the years for analyzing and preparing warnings of a surprise attack?)

The challenge of warning, which is well-recognized by the Intelligence Community, is to identify in advance, potential crisis of high stakes to US national security, from high-probability / high-impact to low-probability / low-impact, and to prioritize them on a continuing basis. For most of my career, the Intelligence Community used warning officers, staff, and inter-agency committees to perform the warning function. Various training courses were dedicated to warning. Warning personnel led the way in introducing new methodologies to test assumptions, to explore alternative outcomes, and to assign levels of probability.

Warning, however, was too often perceived as a specialized function apart from mainstream analysis. Only rarely did warning alerts affect Intelligence Community priorities and resource allocation.

This structural approach -- separating warning from mainstream analysis units -- persisted, despite many efforts over the years to integrate warning practices and methodologies into regional and functional offices. Warning officers for the most part influenced debate through their own products, including National Intelligence estimates, although they were increasingly able to insert themselves into a much broader range of substantive discussions. Many fine warning officers argued persuasively that all analysts should be warning officers, but this was never the case in practice.

(Question 2: Before 9/11, were these methods or principles properly applied to the danger of a catastrophic attack?)

This question was answered in the negative by the Jeremiah Report in 1998 and the Rumsfeld Commission on the Ballistic Missile Threat about the same time. Warning principles and methods were seen to be applied episodically across the Intelligence Community. While some improvements were made thereafter - including several bold, creative initiatives - the urgency of production deadlines continued to trump the need for great analytic rigor.

We were not prepared for 9/11. We recognized the possibility of a catastrophic attack on the homeland, but could not prioritize it against other threats. Congress knew this and could not help. We did not have collection to enable us to make the tactical judgment.

(Question 3: What is right and wrong with the current system of warning?)

The current system of warning has too little accountability at the top and too little integration of best warning practices into mainstream analysis. The warning mission is diluted as resources are stretched to respond to significant and increasing current requirements.

On the positive side, the analytic skills, brainpower, and professional dedication of the US Intelligence Community have no parallel in the world. Warning methodologies are better than ever and they are readily accessible. Technology makes information-sharing and collaboration across agencies - and with foreign services - easily achievable. To the extent that warning efforts have improved, these are some of the reasons.

(Question 4: What is and what should be the role of the Director of Central Intelligence, the

Secretaries of State and Defense, and the National Security Advisor?)

The National Security Advisor, along with the Secretaries of State and Defense, has significant policy formulation and operational responsibilities in the warning process, but I strongly believe that the DCI should remain the President's principal warning officer - responsible for the comprehensive and authoritative assessment of threat. This does not mean that the DCI excludes the views of the others. It means that he is able to articulate the best intelligence case and to express both the consensus and the dissent it engenders in the Community. The DCI is the President's chief "integrator" on warning.

(Question 5: Who is in charge of warning of terrorist attacks against the US today? - the National Intelligence Council? The Directorate of Intelligence in CIA? The Department of Defense? The CIA Counterterrorism Center? The Directorate of Information Analysis & Infrastructure Protection at DHS? Or the recently established Terrorism Threat Integration Center?)

The President is "constitutionally" in charge of warning of terrorist attacks against the US today - with the DCI as his principal intelligence advisor -- but the current picture is actually unclear. Since 9/11, I have observed growing confusion in the warning mission of CTC, DHS, TTIC, and FBI. It is hard to trace accountability through this array. In fact, the record is clear that we have further divided accountability.

(Question 6: Who SHOULD be in charge?)

The DCI, as head of the Intelligence Community, should clearly be in charge, with CIA, CTS, DHS, and FBI playing their appropriate contributing roles in foreign and domestic analysis. The responsibility of TTIC,

which is a center, not a separate agency, needs to be clarified under the DCI, as well as in the appropriations process of the Congress.

(Question 7: Has Congress met its responsibility in establishing priorities, providing resources, and providing oversight of the Intelligence Community?)

In my experience, the Congress is the final arbiter of Intelligence Community priorities because the IC gets what Congress pays for. On substance, however, it is the DCI who must be responsible for the integrated threat assessment from which the priorities flow. That said, prioritization has been especially difficult for the IC, the DCI, and the Congress in the post-Cold-War environment of growing transnational threats. In fact, we have not been able to prioritize.

Multiple commission studies over the past decade have pointed to the challenge of the new threat environment, as well as to serious shortfalls in the performance of individual Intelligence Community agencies. From the mid 1990's, the imperative to transform was clear. In retrospect, we did not transform fast enough to meet the challenge of 9/11. For this, both Intelligence Community leadership and Congressional oversight are, in my judgment, accountable.

(Question 8: What changes in its role do you recommend?)

The Congress needs to recognize first that its ability to conduct effective oversight has eroded in today's more complex, fast-moving world. The greatest frustration has been the lack of competent, objective, and independent evaluation of IC analysis and collection programs, which the Congress needs to make critical budgetary tradeoffs. This serious and chronic problem, of course, relates to the

uncoordinated nature of the Intelligence Community and the inherent weakness of the DCI's position at the head of it. A more powerful DCI, with greater authority over IC programs, would make Congress's oversight job more doable.

(Question 9: What needs to be done to improve our ability as a government to provide better warning?)

As I stated at the outset, I believe our difficulties with warning are a subset of larger problems with managing mainstream analysis in the Intelligence Community. The best analysis applies the same rigor and discipline, whether on regional, functional, or warning accounts.

I have six recommendations:

1. Pursue Intelligence Community Reform - leading with analysis: Others have stated the problems well and pointed to the dysfunctional nature of Intelligence Community organization that makes even easy things hard to do. Technology is making the IC agencies more interconnected and the complexity of the global threat environment is demanding closer analytic collaboration. Current structures impede an integrated DCI-led approach to improving performance. The IC analytic community has come together to produce a strategic plan within the last three years. Closer analytic collaboration is readily achievable and it should be pursued independently of the IC components and disciplines.

2. Foster Intelligence Community Interagency Training: Community analytic program managers have in recent years called for inter-agency training in analytic tradecraft, notably in their Strategic Investment Plan for Intelligence Community Analysis in 2001. They have argued - correctly, I believe -- that this is the best way to inculcate the highest standards and best

practices for analysis, as well as to promote "bonding" and sustained collaboration among our analysts from different agencies.

3. Achieve connectivity: Top IC managers of analysts, whose programs are embedded in much larger collection programs, have made electronic connectivity and the use of collaborative technologies across their programs a top priority for most of the past decade. This achievable goal has still not been realized. It must be achieved if we are to raise performance standards across the community.

4. Promote Outreach: Intelligence Community analysts, especially all-source analysts, now depend on vital sources of information and expertise that reside - and will increasingly reside - outside the Intelligence Community. This means that they must routinely collect more open-source information and must position themselves to interact more with outside experts. Their managers must make this happen under strong DCI leadership. They must come to accept that they do not and will not originate all information critical to them.

5. Make leadership accountable: The DCI is the President's top analyst and warning officer responsible for the quality of analysis that goes with the warning effort. Intelligence Community managers must be held to account - by the Executive Branch and Congress -- making analytic rigor and competitive analysis high priorities for which they will seriously allocate resources and time. Rewards and incentives for both managers and analysts need to reflect this and the DCI must insist on it.

6. Develop effective cross-agency evaluation: The traditionally competitive nature of IC agencies and the non-transparent character of community management as a whole, have militated against systematic, independent, objective evaluation of Intelligence Community programs and performance, including those

concerned with warning. When both the DCI -- and the Congress -- can make decisions based on objective and reliable evaluative data across agency programs, raising and maintaining standards will be an easier task - as will assigning accountability.

Current Position (March 2003-)

House of Representatives, Staff Director of the House Select Committee on Homeland Security. Formed and managed staff for fifty-member committee with responsibility for oversight of the new Department of Homeland Security. (Reference: Committee Chairman Christopher Cox, 202.225.5611.)

Previous Positions

Department of Homeland Security Transition Planning Office, August 2001-January 2002. Headed team standing up the Information Analysis and Infrastructure Protection Directorate. Proposed organization and budget priorities for FY 03 and FY 04. (Reference: Secretary Tom Ridge, 202.456.1621)

Vice-Chairman of the Intellibridge Corporation, Washington (Georgetown), D.C. Provided web-based analysis to corporate and government clients; supervised all analytical and client services for the company. (Reference: Former National Security Adviser Anthony Lake, 202-687-9151)

*Chairman of the National Intelligence Council, July 1997-June 2001. Produced Community-coordinated estimates for President's national security team on top-priority regional and global issues. Published *Global Trends 2015*, a strategic look at the world in the next generation, in collaboration with outside experts (see www.odci.gov/CIA/Publications/pubs.html for the document). (Reference: DCI George Tenet, 703-482-6363)*

Assistant Director of Central Intelligence for

Analysis and Production, July 1998-June 2001. Coordinated analytic programs of eleven intelligence agencies represented in National Intelligence Producers Board. Initiated first baseline assessment of Intelligence Community analytical resources and the first Strategic Investment Plan for Intelligence Community (Reference: John McLaughlin, Deputy Director of Central Intelligence, 703-482-6464)

Deputy Director for Intelligence at CIA, July 1995-July 1997 Supervised all CIA analysts and oversaw preparation of the President's Daily Brief. Inaugurated the first Strategic Plan for the Directorate of Intelligence, and its first major reorganization since 1981, flattening management and promoting technology. (Reference: Former DCI John Deutch, 617-253-1479)

Military

Naval Officer in South East Asia (Engineer Officer on an amphibious landing ship) on active duty from 1967-70 and later in the Naval Reserve as an instructor of navigation at Navy OCS in Newport, Rhode Island; retired from the Naval Reserve (commanded two units) as a Captain in 1990.

Civic Activities

Elected to the Falls Church, Virginia, City Council (1980-82) and subsequently appointed to the city's Planning Commission (1984-88), on which he served as Vice Chairman and Chairman. Later served on the City's Economic Development Commission and Charter Review Commission. (Reference: Former Falls Church Mayor Carol DeLong, 703-534-0981; Tony Griffin, Fairfax County Executive, 703-324-2531 or -2536)

Education

BA in psychology from Holy Cross College in 1966, MA in history from Washington University in St. Louis in 1972, and Ph.D. in history there in 1976. Graduate studies focused on Latin

American. Taught social studies and science in a secondary school in Jamaica as a member of the Jesuit Volunteer Corps (1966-67), and later taught high school for a year while completing graduate studies in St. Louis.

Awards

CIA's Distinguished Intelligence Medal, Distinguished Career Intelligence Medal, and the CIA Director's Medal; the Defense Intelligence Agency Director's Award (three citations); the National Imagery and Mapping Agency Medal; the National Security Agency Distinguished Service Medal; and the State Department's Superior Honor Award. Holy Cross: Ignatius Award, 1996; Sanctae Crucis Award for professional accomplishment, 2002.

Publications

*"Intelligence Community Reform: Let Form Follow Function," *Intelligencer: Journal of U.S. Intelligence Studies*, Volume 13, number 1, Spring/Summer 2002.*

Recent Memberships

Currently Active - Board of Directors, Woodstock Theological Center, Georgetown University; Member, Council on Foreign Relations; Washington World Affairs Council. Until August 2002 - Advisory Panel to Assess Domestic Response Capabilities for Terrorism Involving Weapons of Mass Destruction (Gilmore Commission); National Imagery and Mapping Agency (NIMA) Advisory Panel for Analysis and Production (PNAP); ANSER Institute for Homeland Security Advisory Board; Board of Directors, Viisage (Biometrics) Corporation.

National Commission on Terrorist Attacks Upon the United States
The Commission closed on August 21, 2004. This site is archived.