

**Remarks by the Principal Deputy Director of National Intelligence
Dr. Donald Kerr**

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DR. DONALD M. KERR: Thank you. I'm happy to see a few hearty souls are still here. I realize that being last of the day is a challenge. It's kind of reminiscent of the old saying that in Washington everything that needs to be said already has been, but not everybody has said it. You get to do that later. So I'll be short. I know you've had a busy and productive conference.

You heard from the DNI this morning and you know as a consequence that one of his top priorities is to revamp our security and hiring practices. The policies of the past have lingered so long that they're actually impediments to us as we try to do our job. They've stood in the way, for example, in recent years in terms of hiring first generation Americans. These are people who have the vital skills that no amount of teaching or training can impart, because they grow up in a culture, they understand it, they're part of it. It isn't simply language skills. In fact it's what lies behind language skills that are so important to us today.

If we're going to compete for the best talent we can't handicap ourselves with those outdated practices. So as we work to evolve the intelligence community, a tiny organization or set of organizations, a mere 100,000 people plus an equivalently large contractor base, we need to have some bold goals.

We've made progress in diversifying the intelligence community. I think you've heard that. On the other hand, we haven't made great progress. When you're measuring increases of say order one percent in anything, that's not as significant as we would like to have it.

Government of course is characterized by some as being a somewhat risk-free environment so people are hesitant to set goals. They might not reach them. But in fact the country expects too much of its intelligence community for us to brush off bold initiatives at this point. We can't be content going after the low hanging fruit and the easily accomplished goals, and I think Director McConnell may have reflected on some of the secrets of World War II this morning. He probably mentioned people breaking codes because that was his business. As Ron Sanders mentioned, I spent sixteen and a half years in New Mexico and while there had an opportunity to work closely with the Navajo tribe over a large number of years. I was very fortunate that some of the tribal leadership at the time I was there were in fact the original Code Talkers. So we didn't just have people who learned how to break codes, we had people who learned how to use the language they knew, augmented by a few special words, that was code and was very successful, memorialized today in the National Cryptologic Museum out at NSA at Fort Meade, but clearly a part of our history that not a lot of people have had a first-hand opportunity to experience.

We need to redefine intelligence as well. I think there's a great misunderstanding about what it is. People don't trust it as it is popularly perceived and of course every day we're greeted by headlines and breathless articles that talk about yet another way people suspect us of over-reaching. But we do in fact have a contract with the American people in a sense. We're supposed to gather information, make it available to our leadership so they in fact can assure the safety and security of all of us, our fellow citizens broadly across the country. We often forget that we have very strong strictures against misusing the authorities we have.

I'm often engaged in talking about things like electronic surveillance and other forms of monitoring. I like to point out to people that any of us who are officers of the federal government misuse the authorities we have, it's first of all a felony offense; second, it's punishable by five years in jail and \$100,000 fine. I don't know anyone who's actually been indicted and tried for doing that who'd been a sworn federal officer. So I point out to people, would you rather have, for example, the FBI monitoring in a lawful way communications, or would you prefer to have an undocumented alien at an ISP who you don't know and has no responsibility to you carrying out that function? Everybody gets to vote on this, but the point is the government has in fact has these authorities for a very good reason -- to protect us all.

People say well, we're worried about our privacy. I point out we make a deal on our privacy every day. We order something, we provide our credit card number. We're asked to identify ourselves. We often are asked for a social security number or something else like that. And people say well of course. I give that up freely. I'm getting a service for that. My answer to that, or my argument, and it may not be a perfect argument, none are, is wait a minute, who's the largest service provider in your life? Who are you going to depend on for social security? For Medicare? For all of the other things that our government provides?

Now all we ask is that you perhaps help us by exchanging some information in order that we can in fact ensure your security.

I get killed for this argument in some circles, you might guess, but I happen to believe in it because I think everything we do every day is a balancing of risk and security and what we expect in our future life. Each of us has to decide what our comfort level is with that. Of course people actually run for office, defend their positions on important issues like this, as they should. But I think it's something that all of us as Americans need to think about and need to understand, what's the deal? What do we give? What do we get? Why do we want it that way? And why do we want the form of government that even gives us a voice in how we accomplish this?

We have to watch our words. We have to watch them in arguments like I just advanced. We have to avoid words like jihadist, mujahedeen. We have to be clear. It's not just political correctness, it's to avoid legitimizing the action of terrorists.

We're concerned with fighting and avoiding violent extremism. We don't want to politicize that. We want to identify it and deal with it. So it's important that we communicate clearly what it is that we're trying to do and in that way gain support for being able to carry it out.

We need to expand our focus. Clearly 9/11 in recent years have led us to focus on Muslims and

Arab Americans. But there are a number of other communities that we need to understand, work with, and will be part of our ability to deal with the world that we're trying to work in. We need to understand countries like Indonesia, for example. We need to understand China, not as a vast assemblage of 1.3 billion people, but to recognize that there are differences in different parts of China. We know there are different languages, different dialects and different cultures. That's part of what we need to understand as well.

Lastly in this, we need to listen to you. To seek your counsel, to make our outreach more than just a yearly meeting. You have a role to play in our intelligence community and it's time we recognized that.

In this work there are countless stories about the importance of diversity. There's one I recently learned from an FBI intelligence analyst who had worked on Saddam Hussein's debriefing team in Iraq. While Saddam was being interviewed, a key component of the strategy was to keep him isolated from people outside of the FBI agencies who were questioning him, but he was fluent in several languages. Not deeply so, but sufficiently, and the interviewers needed to find guards who could speak a language that he wouldn't understand. It turned out to be really difficult. He knew bits of Spanish, but not the rapid fire Spanish of Puerto Rico. So Puerto Rican speakers would really flummox him, they certainly do me. And that's what the FBI settled on for his guards. U.S. military members who were native Puerto Ricans in terms of the Spanish that they spoke.

So the importance of diversity comes up in even the most unexpected circumstances.

In this global conflict, this struggle with violent extremism, the clarion call for diversity, diversity of experience, of culture, of interest, has to be our call to action.

I say all of this knowing that human nature is going to make our goal difficult. We don't see a problem until it's right on top of us. That's what we're seeing now. We don't have enough Farsi speakers, not enough math wizards, not enough cultural experts to do all of the things we want to do or are expected to do. And even if we want to have enough, we have to think ahead in terms of the policies and activities that we have to put in place to accomplish these ends.

To do that we need help. We need people like you pushing hard to demand more of us because in the end our national security is tied to your success as well as ours.

It's a big job in front of us and it's easy to feel like you're in this alone even though you have 100,000 friends. But the point is, we're doing this for the entire population, the entire set of U.S. interests. Not just domestically, but worldwide.

So we're in it together. We need that help. And I really wanted to close today by thanking you all for the investment of your time, your energy, your attention in meeting with our people, talking to them, sharing your views, and having an opportunity perhaps to see what we're trying to do and for us to learn from you in terms of how we might do it better.

So thank you very much for the investment you've made today, and I think since I now stand before you and a weekend, it's a good time to stop. Thanks very much.