

Worldwide Threats Hearing
Ranking Member C.A. Dutch Ruppersberger
February 10, 2011
Opening Statement

Thank you, Chairman Rogers.

It is with great honor I sit here today as the Ranking Member of the House Permanent Select Committee on Intelligence.

I would first like to recognize our premier panel of Intelligence Community witnesses. We have the best of the best here today:

- Director of National Intelligence, James Clapper
- CIA Director, Leon Panetta
- FBI Director, Robert Mueller
- Director of DIA, Lieutenant General Ronald Burgess
- Principal Deputy Under Secretary of Defense for Intelligence, Department of Defense, Thomas Ferguson
- Director of the National Counterterrorism Center, Michael Leiter
- Assistant Secretary of State, Bureau of Intelligence and Research, Department of State, Philip Goldberg
- Under Secretary for Intelligence and Analysis, Department of Homeland Security, Caryn Wagner

Thanks for joining us today.

Today's annual worldwide threats hearing is a rare opportunity where members of the intelligence community give an assessment of the threats we are facing around the world in an open, unclassified setting.

On this Committee, our highest priority must be keeping our country and her citizens safe. The stakes are high and the challenges are great, but our intelligence community has some of the best and brightest minds in the world. We are committed to giving these professionals the resources, tools, and capabilities they need to counter the numerous threats that America faces, everything from Al-Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula to home-grown terrorists living in the United States.

At the same time, it is the Committee's responsibility to conduct comprehensive oversight. We will demand accountability from the Intelligence Community and expect we will be kept fully informed. Our job is not to tear you down, but instead to build you up to be the strongest and most capable you can be.

Good intelligence is the best way to prevent terrorism, and keep the world safe.

Since our last threat hearing in February, 2010, we have seen situations where intelligence has succeeded in stopping attacks saving countless lives.

Last October, two Chicago-bound bombs that originated in Yemen were placed on UPS and FedEx planes in hopes of blowing them up. The plan was disrupted and no-one was injured because of good intelligence and a strong partnership with key allies around the world.

In November, a Somali-born teenager plotted to bomb a Christmas tree-lighting ceremony in Oregon, but was caught in an undercover sting operation, again, because of good intelligence.

Right here in Washington, a Pakistani-born man from Virginia was arrested for helping plan simultaneous attacks on several metro stations. He was nabbed before anyone was hurt, again because of good intelligence.

But, we also know we need to do better.

Last May, a young man trained by the Pakistani Taliban packed a van with explosives in Times Square and tried to blow it up. A passerby noticed the smoke and called police. No-one was injured and the terrorist was sentenced to life in prison, but the situation showed how difficult it is to detect low-level operations.

You can not turn on the television or open a newspaper and not hear about the unrest brewing in the Middle East. Mass protests continue to sweep through Egypt. Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak has agreed to step down so a new government can take over, but the protests have not subsided.

I believe this moment of volatility and unrest can be turned into a moment of promise for the Egyptian people and for the world. Egyptians deserve open and free elections. I know they look forward to a future of greater freedom and greater opportunity with a government that is fair, just, and responsive.

Egypt has been and should continue to be an important ally in the region. Our goals remain the same – a stable Middle East, a partner in the fight against global terrorism and the protection of vital energy supplies. The future government of Iraq must support the peace treaty with Israel.

Our intelligence professionals are working diligently to provide the latest intelligence about the situation in Egypt. They do not have a crystal ball and can not predict the future. The protests in Egypt are part of an unpredictable, popular uprising using social media. We are always pushing them to give us more intelligence.

In nearby Iraq, forces are being drawn down. In Afghanistan, a 30,000 troop surge is underway and the security of certain areas is being turned over to local forces. Yemen, Somalia, and Pakistan are all trouble spots when it comes to terrorism.

America's national security hinges on the future of stability across this region. We must be vigilant as we work together with our allies and continue our efforts to prevent safe havens for terrorists and their training.

The 10th Anniversary of 9-11 is approaching this September. This sobering milestone reminds us our fight against terrorism is far from over. Today, almost ten years after the most deadly terrorist attack on American soil, our principal challenge is the same. Identify terrorist plots and stop them before they harm Americans and our very way of life.

Back here at home, we must also address self-radicalization and the threat of terrorism by Americans in America. In addition to the Oregon case, about a week ago, Pennsylvania resident and American citizen Colleen LaRose, known as "Jihad Jane", pleaded guilty to terrorism charges. These are the people we have caught, I am, as are many people in this room, more concerned about the ones still out there that we have not.

Sadly, terrorism is not our only challenge facing national security.

We must not forget about Mexico. The violence in Mexico from the war against the cartels is an American issue as violence spills over the border. Police and elected officials who are taking up a stand against the drug trade are being threatened and killed. We put so many resources into the Middle East. We must also increase our support to Mexico because it has a direct affect on the American people.

Iran and North Korea still pose significant threats to U.S. interests and to international security. I remain extremely concerned about Iran's nuclear weapons program and the problems it causes for Israel. Iran continues to stir things up and play a game of cat and mouse. It seems that the prospects for diplomatic dialogue aren't going anywhere.

China and Russia pose their own national security challenges. The significant build up of the Chinese navy is a real issue. At the same time, we can't ignore the fact that the Chinese and other government and non-government groups are engaging in cyber attacks. These attacks can cause big problems even though right now they are gathering little national attention.

Cyber networks don't just power our cell phones and I-pads. They keep our electric grid running, secure the banking world, protect our water supply and operate our classified military and intelligence systems. If those systems are disrupted, it could have catastrophic consequences. We already have examples of what is possible.

Last week it was reported the Nasdaq was hacked. Trades were not affected, but hackers apparently penetrated certain internal software. The website Wikileaks disclosed tens of thousands of classified documents that could put sensitive diplomacy

in jeopardy and could risk national security. When Mastercard, Paypal and Amazon prevented their supporters from making donations, a group calling themselves “Operation Payback” attacked these websites and shut them down for a period of time.

The threat from cyber attacks is real and must be addressed. America must beef up its cybersecurity efforts.

The last issue I would like to discuss is space. We have some of the best satellite systems. America is the most powerful country in the world, in part, because we control the skies.

Satellites are important because they keep us safe. We use satellites and their images to track suspected terrorists around the world and stop future attacks. Satellites allow us to monitor important global developments and provide real-time data to our troops on the ground in Iraq and Afghanistan.

When our troops climb a hill on the battlefield, they know what is on the other side of that hill because of our technology. We can find that needle in the haystack because we have the best satellites in the world.

You may have heard the President of the United States mention our “Sputnik moment”. Well, he stole my line. I have been talking about this for years. More than 50 years ago, the Soviet Union rocked our world by launching Sputnik into space. Just 12 years later, America answered the challenge and landed a man on the moon.

The space industry was born. America made a massive investment in research and development, employed the best and brightest scientists, mathematicians and engineers, and put unprecedented emphasis on science education. America made worldwide headlines and just about every kid on Earth wanted to be Neil Armstrong. Today, America’s dominance in space is fragile.

We have seen skyrocketing costs, lax oversight, and failed programs. When it comes to rocket launch capabilities, other countries have seen costs drop, but the United States has not. The U.S. is spending more per rocket launch and battling more delays than anywhere else. That is because the United States has committed to a two-company alliance to handle all launches, despite the fact that other U.S. companies are showing promise.

We must get costs under control and consider other approaches that satisfy the needs of the intelligence community as well of the warfighter without busting our bottom line. In this era of, tight budgets we must ensure every dollar is used wisely. I think doing an across the board cut is a bad idea. You cut the good programs with the bad. We must review each program on its own merits. We must identify what is working and get rid of what is not, including redundant programs that cost us too much money.

As we embark on this new Congress, we must do what is right for the American people to keep our families and communities safe. I have great respect for the men and women of the intelligence community. They live in the shadows in remote locations all around the world risking their lives for their country.

Sometimes I refer to them as the offensive lineman on a football team. You only hear about them when they make a mistake. I would like to honor these players for their service and sacrifice by giving them what they need to get the job done.

Thank you.