Clapper speaks bluntly on sequestration, commercial imagery while keeping eye on world's danger zones

by Joe Francica Directions Magazine
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First, Jim Clapper, the Director of National Intelligence (DNI) is a "geo guy." If only more agencies and private companies had his vision there would be little thought as to how much growth the geospatial industry would see.

Second, the man speaks with so much perspicacity. It's unlikely the White House and IC could find anyone who sees with as much vision.

These are only two of my observations from his address at this year's GEOINT Symposium. Although I've heard Clapper many times his remarks were guarded until the question and answer session. Then, he was both direct and at times, defiant. His presentation was given from a prepared statement which was different from past years. He had always spoke extemporaneously. Clearly, he had a lot that he needed to say.

Clapper's prepared remarks focused on three points:

1. Move from an industry centric IT model to enterprise integration. The ODNI built their budgets around a common IC cloud and an IC desktop (see NGA Director Long's remarks). The goal is for an architecture will be in place and in use by 2018.
2. Bring SIGINT and GEOINT together in the same time domain and enable the IC to look at an activity over time and alert the analyst to where the action is.
3. Security Leaks: there are two separate FBI investigations ongoing regarding leaks. "We are doing something to stop the hemorrhaging. We in the IC must set the stage for the entire government," said Clapper.

When Clapper finished with his prepared remarks he was much more candid.

On the Need for Commercial Imagery Providers
When asked about the coming merger of DigitalGlobe and GeoEye, his remarks were blunt. "There is no bigger fan of commercial imagery than I. Commercial imagery has tremendous advantages. And a great asset domestically as well. But as I alluded to last year, we have to make a 'risk vs. gain' [assessment] … In a constrained funding environment; choices have to be made. For what I'm responsible for, we had to make some hard choices based on the demand and the requirements versus what we can afford."

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On Sequestration - "The fiscal cliff"
Clapper said that "In short, sequestration will be disastrous for intelligence." He spoke at length the fact that it's the manner in which it would have to be implemented leaving Clapper no leeway to make cuts as he sees fit. "So we can only hope that the lame duck Congress does something to prevent this from happening," said Clapper. He said that if it does happens it would occur during a time of the most diverse and demanding threats that he has ever seen in his 50 years in service.

On Libya
Clapper was particular pointed in his remarks about the events surrounding the death of U.S. Ambassador to Libya Chris Stevens and the intelligence community's ability to assess the source of the attack. Here are his paraphrased remarks:"Any event involving loss of life is highly charged emotionally and politically," said Clapper.

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