

DIRECTOR OF NATIONAL INTELLIGENCE  
Washington, DC 20511

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Colleagues:

It has been an especially challenging week for the Intelligence Community and the nation. The attempted terrorist attack on Christmas Day did not succeed, but, as one of several recent attacks against the U.S. inspired by jihadist ideology or directed by al Qa'ida and its affiliates, it reminds us that our mission to protect Americans is unending.

The President was direct in his assessment that intelligence failures were a contributing factor in the escalation of this threat. This is a tough message for us to receive. But we have received it, and now we must move forward and respond as a team.

In coming days we will review what information was available to whom, determine what mistakes were made in assessing or sharing that information, commend those who did their jobs well, and hold accountable those who did not. I have no doubt in our ability to close the gaps that these attacks exposed.

Whatever shortcomings emerge in these investigations should not obscure the progress the Intelligence Community has made in developing collection and analysis capabilities, in improving collaboration, and in sharing information, both against al Qa'ida and against the many other threats to our national security. The Intelligence Community should be proud of its role in weakening al Qa'ida's ability to plan, organize, finance, and carry out highly orchestrated attacks conducted by well trained teams, like those on 9/11. Al Qa'ida is diminished as evidenced by the fact they are sending inexperienced individuals without long association with al Qa'ida, but susceptible to jihadist ideology. Unfortunately, even unsophisticated terrorists can kill many Americans.

What concerns me most now is not only stopping the types of attacks of the past, but also anticipating and stopping the different, more cunning attacks of the future. Al Qa'ida and its affiliate organizations, as well as individual suicide terrorists, have observed our defenses and are designing future attacks to circumvent them. They are doing so right now, as you are reading this message. These attacks will be even harder to uncover, interpret, and stop. We must anticipate other types of attacks that are within the capability of these individuals and groups, and improve our defense to stay ahead of them.

We are an adaptive, learning organization. We can and must outthink, outwork, and defeat the enemy's new ideas. Our Intelligence Community is now more collaborative than ever before, knows how to operate as a team, and can adjust to conditions on the ground. In the immediate term we have a challenging job of self-examination, and we will do it as a community. As we face the continuing threat of jihadist terror attacks in the future, we will work together to understand, anticipate, and act against our enemies.

You have my unequivocal support and engagement as we move through this challenging process and continue to progress. I could not be more proud of this community, of all we have accomplished together, and of your willingness to sacrifice for the country. We have more to do, and we will do it as a mutually supporting team, with our eye on the goal of keeping Americans safe.

Dennis C. Blair