



**Remarks by the Director of National Intelligence  
Mr. Mike McConnell**

**2008 Intelligence Community Awards Ceremony**

**The Ronald Reagan Building & International Trade Center  
Washington, DC**

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DIRECTOR McCONNELL: Thank you very, very much. That was a very kind introduction and, since my voice does not project like Dr. Sanders, I'll use the microphone here. I often find it interesting to share a little perspective, or a couple of insights – I know what it's like to be sitting out there; done it many times – but what's it like to be sitting up here? Now, you saw the color guard come in. You saw the flags go out, and I always wonder who on the front audience is going to get a face full of flag – (laughter) – and then you wait for the music to start and you watch the muscles in the back of the young men holding the flags start to tense, because it's not quite starting. And then we had the baby's voice, which I thought was wonderful. I – that's the best national anthem I think I've ever heard, so good on him and I welcome the youngster that's here. I'm so glad to see a full house. I see lots of the senior leadership. Thank you for being here and supporting this event.

We serve in silence and succeed in silence, by and large, so this is an event – one of the few places where we can publicly recognize superior service. Now, I've signed all these awards, and I've read through the process for approval and I can tell you, not only outstanding service, but absolutely stunning results. Let me give you – I won't quote specific people, but let me give you some comments from the last few weeks. This community is the intellectual brain trust of the nation. This community has adjusted to the new era and is providing a level of service unsurpassed in our history. This community is integrated with the policy and operational aspects of our challenges in a way that we've never experienced before. So those are some of the observations from the current leadership that will soon be departing.

Everybody wants to know about the new guys. I had the opportunity to sit across a table and get some dialogue with what we do and what we think and what the information represents. And I can tell you that, universally, very well-informed people, very smart, very strategic – and all the signs, at the moment, are positive about the engagement, not only with the previous administration but with this community and the next administration, so I'm very, very much looking forward to that transition and we'll serve a new leadership in the nation.

I like to think of this community as a corps of intelligence professionals. Regardless of who's in the White House, regardless of who dominates on the Hill, our job is to serve the nation and to

serve the nation's elected leadership. And that's who we are and that's what we do. And we do it in a way that risks lives, sometimes. It's certainly challenging, sometimes. We often are required to deliver unpleasant news – sometimes perceived as bad news. I've been often referred to as “a bad news guy in a bad news environment,” but that's our job and we do it, and we do it in the interest of the nation.

We've created two new awards, some of which will be awarded today. The first is the National Intelligence Reform Medal for those who really put heart and soul and effort into the reforms and the transformation that we had to achieve as a result of the changes in 2001 and since. And the second one is the Award for Collaborative Leadership. As you all know from comments that I've made in the past and my current views – is if we work it together across the community, all boats will rise – the output will be greater than the sum of the individual parts. So it gives me great pleasure to participate in this ceremony this morning, and I look forward to shaking your hands as you come across the stage.

It's my understanding we have 112 awards to give out. Take it easy on my hand, if you would – (chuckles) – but we will have you come across the stage and get an opportunity to take a picture. It's a pleasure to be here; I'm very proud to be a part of this community. And the last comment I would say is that the place you do not want your Intelligence Community is the front page of the Washington Post. (Laughter.) Now, that article had an alarming headline, but if you read it, it's – it delivers a reasonable message, I think. So we'll look forward to the future and see what it holds. The message that both General Hayden and I have delivered to the incoming administration is, we view ourselves as professionals – as apolitical professionals – and we are available to serve at the pleasure of the President. If they choose others, that's fine, we're happy with that; we have other things to do.

If they ask us to stay for some reason, for a period of time, we would stay and assist them in the transition. So I look forward to participating in the ceremony and congratulations to each and every one of you. For the families here, a special welcome: We often can't tell you what we do or how we do it or what the results are, but this is our opportunity, among the peers of the community, to say, these are the best of the very best. So we are delighted to have you here and congratulations and thank you to the families as well as the members receiving the awards.

(Applause.)

(END)