



**Transcript / Remarks as Delivered by
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Director of National Intelligence**

GEOINT Symposium 2013*

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For lots of reasons, it's great to be back here with, kind-of my roots, the Geospatial Community. I'll spare you all my lines about how great it is to be outside the beltway.

I really think of this community as family, and as Stu [Shea, chairman of U.S. Geospatial Intelligence Foundation] recounted so brilliantly, it's great to see how our little symposium from 2003 is all grown up.

I want to thank the Geospatial Intelligence Foundation for bringing together government, industry, academia, Allies, state and local officials, and others involved in national security this week.

Keith [Masback, CEO of U.S. Geospatial Intelligence Foundation], you and your team adapted superbly when our symposium, now in its "pre-teen" years, didn't do what it was supposed to do in October.

A huge thank you as well to all the corporate participants, for sure, without whom this event simply wouldn't happen. I think the corporate support and the attendance here, the number of exhibitors, is a great testament to the value of this symposium.

I can't believe Keith has been doing this for six years, and he still has the same passion and the same commitment as when he started.

And of course I also want to add my thanks and praise for Stu Shea, one of the pioneers. So Stu, all I can say is thank you for your very distinguished service, not just to geospatial intelligence or to the foundation, but your distinguished service to the nation.

And I need to recognize Tish Long [Director of National Geospatial-Intelligence Agency], not just for her leadership at NGA, but also as the functional manager for geospatial intelligence. It's no accident, no coincidence that GEOINT has matured as a collection discipline at the same time that NGA matured as an institution under Tish's great leadership.

Personally, I'm tremendously proud of Tish, and tremendously proud of the National Geospatial-Intelligence Agency. Tish, you and your great people have brought to life things we just talked about, dreamed about, when I served as director.

You already noticed, and Stu called attention to the fact that everything connected with this year's symposium is "GEOINT 2013*" with a little asterisk after the year. It's kind of like we're trying to pretend the government shutdown didn't happen last October.

Whatever we call this event, it's been a year-and-a-half since we met for GEOINT, and to me it seems longer than that. The past 18 months was one of the toughest stretches for the Intelligence Community I've seen in my 50-plus years in the business, and as all of you know, it's not exactly been a fun year or fun time for me personally. But, and this is important, I'm proud of how the community responded.

The tragic attack on the U.S. diplomatic facility in Benghazi happened 4 weeks before GEOINT 2012. We closed out 2012 dealing with that aftermath and talking with the Congress and our leaders about how, if we let sequestration happen, it would cause us to lose intelligence capabilities.

On January 1, we narrowly avoided the "fiscal cliff," as Congress passed a debt ceiling increase at the last minute. We thought we'd avoided sequestration, but it had just been delayed.

On March 1, sequestration hit us. Instead of leaping off the fiscal cliff, we slowly started rolling down a hill that just kept getting steeper and faster. A year later, the sequester cuts became the new baseline, the new normal.

But we did precisely what we said we would do, three years ago when the first down-budgets loomed. We made some hard choices and defunded real intelligence capabilities, actually took things offline, instead of repeating the mistakes of the 1990s; and many of us lived through that, and taxing all our programs until none of them worked right, whether operational or support.

We told our national leaders in the White House and on Capitol Hill that we aren't going to pretend to "do more with less." We are going to doing less with less. We're accepting more risk, and, more importantly, we as an integrated community are deciding where we are going to take risk. Budgets are going to continue down, and so far, I think for the most part, we've passed that test.

Then on April 15, a year ago today, two bombs exploded at the finish line of the Boston Marathon. That tragedy tested our ability to quickly coordinate intelligence among intel agencies and federal, state, and local authorities. That

was the challenge intelligence reform was aimed at, and I think, by and large, we passed that test as well. The inevitable post-event critiques are out, and they reveal no “smoking guns,” no real failure to “connect the dots.”

Then on June 5, the *Guardian* published its first story from classified documents leaked by Edward Snowden. The very first article, and many of those published since, have been inaccurate, misleading or incomplete in how they characterized intelligence activities. Still, they reveal vital intelligence secrets. So we have watched as our intelligence advantage eroded in front of our eyes. I’ll come back to Snowden a little later.

Near the end of last summer, we started hearing that the Syrian government had used chemical weapons on its own people. We got evidence of a large-scale chemical weapons attack August 21: more than a thousand killed, including civilians and children, and so we got swept into the debate about what was actually happening in Syria.

The intelligence we produced on chemical weapons in Syria was outstanding. After we presented our assessment to the United Nations, an ambassador who’d been standing by Secretary Powell in 2002 came up to one of my folks, one of our analysts, and said that the difference between the Iraq WMD assessment in 2002 and Syria chemical weapons in 2013 was, “like night and day.”

We laid out what we knew, gave our confidence levels and alternate analysis, and clearly stated what we didn’t know. And by the way, NGA’s contributions to this effort were huge – in content, magnitude, and impact, and were directly visible to the White House and the Hill. So, I think we passed that test pretty well too.

By the end of this past summer, we were pretty well inundated by what I came to call “the 3 “S”s: Sequestration, Snowden, and Syria. Then, after struggling all summer to prevent furloughs from sequestration, we ended up furloughing 70 percent of our IC workforce because of the government shutdown.

We even had to cancel GEOINT. So “shutdown” was a fourth “S.” So far in 2014, around Washington, it’s just been “snow.”

[laughter]

We’ve had challenges since GEOINT 2012, but we tackled them in a way I’m pretty proud of. We came together as a community to deal with sequestration. We addressed the leaks by increasing transparency.

This summer will mark ten years since the publication of the 9/11 Commission Report. The primary fault they found with the Intelligence Community was that we couldn’t, or wouldn’t, “act jointly.” A decade later, we have met that challenge and are passing that test too.

And thanks to all of you, we even managed to reschedule the GEOINT Symposium.

So I think Intelligence Integration, which is my mantra, is paying off .

Today's national security environment includes the most diverse threats I can remember in my fifty-plus years in this business. I mentioned the tragedy in Boston and the ongoing sectarian war in Syria, but there are many more challenges we face at home and abroad.

The internal security posture in Iraq is deteriorating. Cyber threats are growing. We're also dealing with, obviously, a very assertive Russia, (It brings back memories), a competitive China, a challenging Iran, and a dangerous, unpredictable North Korea. And global demands for resources are complicated by climate change. The list goes on.

And the leaks that started last summer, of course, are complicating everything.

That brings me to the myth of Edward Snowden. I want to talk about that myth for a few minutes, and then I'll talk about the implications of the leaks in relation to GEOINT.

I had the chance to discuss Snowden at Georgetown University Friday and at the University of Georgia yesterday. So today is my third event in a row that begins with the letters G – E – O. That's a very corny line that my speechwriter stuck in there.

[laughter]

I told those university students about a recent article in the *Washington Post* on college admissions. An admissions officer from George Washington University told the *Post* that for the admissions-essay question: "Who's your personal hero?" the admissions officer observed that she was "seeing a lot of Edward Snowden citations."

The idea that young people see Edward Snowden as a hero really bothers me. So I felt that I needed to talk about Snowden at Georgetown and Georgia, and I'm going to do the same elsewhere at colleges and universities.

I told them first off that despite being a geezer, I do get it. I understand that a lot of young people see Snowden as a courageous whistleblower, standing up to authority.

I, personally, believe that whistleblowing, in its highest form, takes an incredible amount of courage and integrity. But Snowden isn't a whistleblower.

I offered them Sergeant Joe Darby as a whistleblowing role model. Joe was an Army reservist stationed at the Abu Ghraib prison in Iraq in 2003. One afternoon, one of the prison guards handed him a CD. Joe popped the disk into his computer, and was shocked when he saw graphic images of guards abusing prisoners.

Those guards were friends of his, some since high school. He agonized, thinking of his friends, and his superiors, whom he'd be implicating. And he worried that these people could come after him for retribution. It took him three weeks of torment before he turned the disk over to a special agent with the Army Criminal Investigation Command.

You know about the global uproar when the Abu Ghraib pictures went public. For Joe, it was more personal. His fellow soldiers shook his hand and thanked him. But back home, people called him a traitor and threatened his life. The Army needed to give his family an armed escort for six months.

That act of whistleblowing took courage and integrity.

In 2007, Joe Darby told the BBC, "I've never regretted for one second what I did when I was in Iraq, to turn those pictures in." I think Joe makes a great role model, and I'd like to read an admissions essay on him.

I told the students at those two Universities that we need people with the courage and integrity of Joe Darby in our Intelligence Community. Being an intelligence officer means that, sometimes, you are the most junior person in the room, and you still have to voice unpopular facts, to speak truth to power.

Because, at the end of the day, it's our job to give useful intelligence to decision makers and policymakers, not just to tell them what they want to hear, as tempting as that can be sometimes – as I've learned in this job.

There is a sharp contrast between Joe Darby and Edward Snowden.

Snowden said he felt NSA's surveillance program was being used to violate privacy and civil liberties. If that was his concern, he had a lot of options on where to go with it. He could have reported it to seniors at NSA, or, like Joe Darby, he could have gone to investigators. There's an Inspector General for NSA, and another for the entire Intelligence Community. My office has a Civil Liberties Protection Officer. Snowden also could have gone to the Justice Department or Congress.

As we've seen, Snowden is superb at finding information. So I think he could have tracked those people down, had he given it a little thought. But he chose not to go to any of those places.

No, he stole an enormous amount of documents containing information about a broad range of intelligence activities, and he flew to China, gave the documents to reporters, then flew to Russia, where he remains today. And as Joan mentioned, China and Russia, of course, serve as beacons of free expression and civil liberties and privacy.

[laughter]

Despite all of that, I told the students at Georgetown and Georgia that I felt like we still could have a conversation about, “Edward Snowden – the whistleblower,” if most of the documents he leaked actually related to the surveillance programs he says he was blowing the whistle on.

But what Snowden has stolen and exposed has gone way, way beyond his professed concerns with the protection of privacy rights. He stole and leaked secrets about how we protect U.S. businesses from cyber threats, and how we support U.S. troops in war zones. And other leaked documents directly put American lives in danger, and as a result, we’ve lost critical *foreign* intelligence collection sources.

We’re beginning to see changes in the communications behavior of adversaries, particularly terrorists, a trend that I anticipate will continue. As a consequence, our nation is less safe, and our people less secure. So Edward Snowden’s actions fall far short of a courageous act of defying authority.

The leaks have been the first half of what you might call a “perfect storm” that converged on the Intelligence Community. They have cut deeply into our capabilities, particularly exposing how NSA collects SIGINT. This is potentially the most massive, and most damaging theft of intelligence information in the nation’s history.

And while this is occurring, we have also been in a decreasing budget cycle for the past 3 years, and budgets are going to continue down. As I’ve said on the Hill, whatever you think of intelligence, at the rate we’re going in the budget, with the budget, you’re going to have a lot less of it to complain about.

My major takeaway from this whole experience has been the need for transparency. In the face of those losses, we made the decision to declassify more than 2,000 pages of documents, beginning last summer, because the best way to deal with misconceptions that have resulted from the leaks was to increase transparency.

But the same transparency that reassures our citizens comes with a cost. It hurts our capabilities because our adversaries go to school on that very transparency. When we boiled it all down, we felt – I felt – we needed to pay that cost.

Even if it meant losing some sources and methods, we needed to engage in the kind of national conversation free societies have, to correct misunderstandings that lead to false allegations in the media, and to counter misperceptions that the IC workforce is violating civil liberties. So we made the painful choice to declassify critical documents, in the interests of being more transparent.

We passed this test, actually of the very integrity as a Community.

Another takeaway for me, and more relevant to this group, is that GEOINT is going to be increasingly critical to our national leaders, as they look to understand the world. That's partly because of what the leaks and the "perfect storm" have cost other intelligence disciplines, and it's because of what GEOINT offers.

GEOINT has a great advantage in our current environment because it's the most transparent of the collection disciplines. We've been able to talk publicly about GEOINT because of NGA support to disaster relief and to the Sochi Olympics, to Super Bowls, and other key public events.

GEOINT has played a heavy role in Syria analysis and in counter-proliferation. And NGA is regarded as the model of how to support military operators, in great measure because NGA embeds analysts with the supported organization. And I can tell you, Customer Number One [President Obama] has really gotten schooled up on what GEOINT does for him.

GEOINT can't determine a foreign leader's plans and intentions, what's inside someone's head. But we can impute plans and intentions based on what GEOINT can portray. Right now, GEOINT is crucial to understanding what's happening in the Ukraine, and in nearby Russia.

We do not know what's happening inside President Putin's head. That's not a secret we can capture with any intelligence discipline. It's a mystery that would require clairvoyance to know. Too often, by the way, the IC is held to the same standards for divining both secrets and clairvoyance.

But we have rich geospatial analysis of what Russian troops are doing in Crimea and along the Ukraine borders. And we're pushing to turn this into Activity Based Intelligence, and I anticipate Tish will have a word or two to say about that, to not only know where they are, but to know what they're doing. We're turning GEOINT into an anticipatory capability.

ABI and its accompanying future overhead architecture are revolutionary for our future. The foundation for this, and the other "Big Idea," at least for me, for the IC's future, is IC ITE [the Intelligence Community Information Technology Enterprise]. I know a lot of people have been wondering what's happening with IC

ITE. Well, it took us about two years to lay the foundation, but we're now engaging the mission users in collection and analysis around the IC, and we're ready for the agencies to begin adoption of IC ITE.

They're working on the business plan to allow each IC element to depend on the others for common services. This is a whole new paradigm for the Intelligence Community, where we actually have to trust each other. And, we're laying our capabilities across a common IC framework for IT.

Very few people thought we could ever integrate our IT systems, and many still don't, but we're doing it, and we're going to keep doing it.

I think keeping just a steady pace and steady pressure will bring it to success. That's one of the big reasons why my superb principal deputy and professional partner, Stephanie O'Sullivan, and I, while of course serving at the pleasure of the President, *plan* to stick around as long as we can, until the end of this administration, to make sure IC ITE sticks.

[applause]

Thanks.

IC ITE will help us move all the collection disciplines, but particularly GEOINT, into the "activity space." That anticipatory capability is the future of intelligence, and NGA is carrying GEOINT in the vanguard.

I'm incredibly proud of how far this community has come, particularly over the past ten years, and where it's going. So thanks to all of you, particularly our corporate partners, for being here this week, and for the continued work you'll continue to do together when everyone returns home.

So now, let me end this and get Joan up here, and we'll take some questions. Thanks very much.

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