



As Prepared for Delivery - Remarks by DNI Clapper at the IC LGBTQA Summit

**Remarks as prepared for delivery
by The Honorable James R. Clapper Director of National Intelligence
Intelligence Community (IC) Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender Allies (LGBTQA) Summit**

**Wednesday, March 19, 2014
National Security Agency, Fort Meade, Maryland**

I thought I should start by explaining to you why I'm here speaking to you, and why I wanted to be here to speak to you. It has to do with my own personal history, my own "journey," I guess you might call it. This began for me about 50 years ago, when I was a very young lieutenant in the Air Force, on my first assignment after technical training as a SIGINT [signals intelligence] officer, at what was then Kelly Air Force Base in Texas.

As a career enhancing experience, I was assigned to what was called the Headquarters Squadron Section, which was a small office, the mission of which was to administer to the troops – their morale, welfare, the barracks, the mess hall, the motor pool, and of course, their discipline. So I got to do things like be a summary court officer for an airman murdered in a bar fight. I helped administer discipline, like giving out Article 15s (non-judicial punishment).

One indelible experience I had was processing the dishonorable discharges of two airmen who were roommates in the barracks, and who had been "outed" (which was not a term used back then) as homosexuals. In the day, there was, by regulation, no other recourse; they automatically lost their security clearances, and had to be issued dishonorable discharges.

They were model airmen: superb Russian linguists, meticulous about their military responsibilities, and loved serving their country. I remember thinking what a waste of talent it was to do this, in addition to being a profound injustice.

Much later on, I served at NSA as the Wing Commander for all Air Force troops. Admiral Bobby Inman was then the Director, and he did something that was courageous and precedent-setting. A very gifted crypto-mathematician was "outed" as a homosexual. The "standard" thing to do, of course, would be to remove this officer's clearance, and ultimately, end his employment at NSA. Instead, Admiral Inman restored his clearance, on the condition that this officer acknowledge his sexual preference to his co-workers – thus removing the alleged vulnerability to blackmail, which then was the standard rationale for removing someone's clearance.

About ten years later, when I served as the Chief of Air Force Intelligence, I was confronted with



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a similar situation. I recalled the experience I had as a young officer, helping to expel two great airman linguists, as well as the example I saw Admiral Inman set. And I decided that, as the Air Force Senior Intelligence Officer, since I now had the authority that I didn't have a quarter of a century earlier, I would follow the example set by Admiral Inman. So, I restored the clearance of a civilian employee who'd had it taken away, under the same conditions. That person has served our country with great distinction since then, and is still doing so.

This set a precedent in the Air Force, and I took some flak for it from some of my Air Staff general officer colleagues. But it was the right thing to do – for that person, and for our country. And although I didn't admit it to myself at the time, maybe I was also trying to atone for what happened to those two airman Russian linguists, all those many years before.

I have known many gay men and women during my 50 years in intelligence, both on active duty in the armed forces, and as a civilian since then. I cannot imagine the stress that they have endured, to be able to serve their country. It is simply incomprehensible to me, trying to keep and live with such a secret. And it is simply wrong to have compelled people to exist that way.

I was around when "Don't Ask, Don't Tell" was enacted. Many people rationalized at the time that this was a practical compromise. But it really wasn't, since it didn't relieve the burden of secrecy, or remove the pervasive fear that any day, with no warning, one could be "outed" and one's career would be over.

Then another act of courage occurred in February of 2010, when then-Secretary Bob Gates and then-Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff Mike Mullen were leading the campaign to overturn "Don't Ask, Don't Tell" in the military. They testified before the Senate Armed Services Committee, and Admiral Mullen said one of the most riveting things ever at a Congressional hearing. I want to read a bit of what he said:

Speaking for myself, and myself only, it is my personal belief that allowing homosexuals to serve openly would be the right thing to do. No matter how I look at the issue, I cannot escape being troubled by the fact that we have in place a policy which forces young men and women to lie about who they are in order to defend their fellow citizens. For me, it comes down to integrity – theirs as individuals, and ours as an institution.

If there was such a thing as an award for exemplifying what it means to be a leader – to speak truth to power, to do the right thing and, in doing so to endure the slings and arrows of the critics, all for the betterment of our troops – Admiral Mullen would have earned it by making that public statement, which knowing him as I do was from the heart. And he was so, so right to say what he said.



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You know, intelligence is a profession that involves using one's intellect. And I have always believed that leadership in intelligence boils down to motivating – indeed inspiring – people to use their intellects to conduct our missions. Other factors – race, color, ethnicity, religious belief, sexual preferences – don't, or at least shouldn't, take away from that.

The main thing is a desire to serve one's country, and a willingness to comply with the need to keep secret that which genuinely needs to be secret. Qualities like professional competence, dedication to mission, loyalty to one's colleagues, agency, and country are the requisites.

So, as I look back over the 50 years or so of the history of American intelligence, I can say, yes, we've made some progress in correcting these egregious injustices that have been imposed on the basis of sexuality, which, of course, have nothing to do with the professional qualifications I just mentioned. But at the same time, until recently, that progress has been glacially slow. And there is, I realize, a huge contrast between institutional change and cultural change, which will always lag behind.

So the fact that we openly sponsor an event such as this, and that people can, if they choose, be open about who they are, is all good. But as many of you know better than I, that doesn't mean full acceptance – socially, or in the workplace. We can continue to eliminate the institutional forms of discrimination, and we will do that. But no one, most of all you, are so naïve as to think the social change will come overnight. We all know it won't.

So, let me come back to why I wanted to speak to you here, at this summit. I always try not to take myself, or the position I occupy, too seriously. But I do realize that I can, should, and must use the position as a "bully pulpit" when the occasion calls for it. And, this occasion calls for it. I need to set the example in the Intelligence Community, and be part of the change that we all want to see take place. There's no way that I can ever really know what members of the LGBT community have gone through. But I can absolutely proclaim myself as an Ally. And I'm proud to be one.

I very much wanted to address this issue at last year's summit, but couldn't because of scheduling conflicts. I resolved that no matter what, I was going to join you this year.

Moreover, this isn't just about what's altruistically right. It's also about what the IC is about: integration. It means having and using a widely diverse workforce, and taking advantage of all those great intellects we have, while removing as many frustrations and distractions as possible. So – it's not just about what's right. It's about good business in our profession.



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I have some commendations – some expressions of appreciation – I need to convey.

First, a big thanks to NSA for hosting this year's event. As you now understand, this setting at NSA is particularly meaningful to me.

Second, I'm very gratified about the effort of employee organizations leading the way. These groups are instrumental in hosting events like this one, and sharing information to help educate the entire workforce. I'm so pleased to see LGBTQA Employee Resource Groups at individual agencies and components.

Third, I especially want to acknowledge the hard work of the visionaries who put together events like today's Summit. I know there will be a future event to honor the Summit organizers, but I'd like to take this opportunity to recognize three leaders: Charles B. (Central Intelligence Agency, 1st Annual LGBTQA Summit), Lee M. (National Geospatial-Intelligence Agency, 2nd Annual LGBTQA Summit), and Brian S. (NSA, 3rd Annual LGBTQA Summit). They deserve praise, admiration, applause, and our appreciation.

Finally, I understand you'll be hearing from Kristin Beck, the transgender retired Navy SEAL. I saw Kristin's Twitter page, and was especially taken by the tweet from a fan who heard her speak a few days ago at the South by Southwest film festival in Austin. It read: "I'm so floored by the Navy SEALs in the ... audience with me, supporting Kristin Beck ..."

It's a real coup to have her speak to you at this summit. With her courage, integrity, and energy, she's breaking down attitude barriers like she used to break down doors as a SEAL. I understand she'll be at West Point at the end of the month. I'm sure she'll win over hearts and minds up there as well.

In this regard, I'd like to recognize an effort that was born out of the first summit, and that's the Transgender Working Group. I understand that over the past year, with members from across the IC, they've been behind the idea of educating colleagues and managers of the transgender workforce, and more specifically, transitioning employees on how to interact with those employees before, during, and after gender transition.

I'm told that the group has produced a resource tool to help users understand transgender issues for use in our community. I just wanted to commend you for this effort. That type of grassroots, cross-IC effort embodies what intelligence integration is all about. I believe we should approach all of our community challenges as an integrated community, learning from each other, and applying our best resources from around the IC. That's the real spirit behind today's gathering. And I have great expectations for what you will all do with the energy that's



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been generated here this morning, and that I'm sure will continue to be generated, long after the summit is over.

Let me finish with the words of the brilliant science-fiction writer Arthur C. Clarke, the author of *2001: A Space Odyssey*, which was in part about the quest to find intelligent life in the universe. He said some great things over the years, including: "I'm hoping to find intelligent life in Washington."

Clarke, who was just way ahead of his time, also said this: "We stand now at the turning point between two eras. Behind us is a past to which we can never return."

I'd like to think that we're now well beyond the turning point that applies to equal opportunity and diversity for the LGBT community. Because I know, there's no going back.

Thanks very much.

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