

**REMARKS BY THE PRESIDENT
&
THE DIRECTOR OF NATIONAL INTELLIGENCE
AT THE
CEREMONIAL SWEARING-IN FOR MR. MIKE McCONNELL**

**DNI HEADQUARTERS – BOLLING AIR FORCE BASE
WASHINGTON, DC**

FEBRUARY 20, 2007

10:16 A.M. EST

THE PRESIDENT: Thanks for the warm welcome. Good morning. I'm proud to be here at Bolling Air Force Base to congratulate Mike McConnell on becoming our nation's second Director of National Intelligence. I'm really pleased that Mike's wife, Terry; his four children, Erin, Mark, Jennifer, and Christine; their grandchildren; his sister -- (laughter) -- and other family members have joined us. It's a big deal to watch your dad and granddad get sworn in to a position of this importance.

I appreciate members of my administration who have joined us, in particular the Secretary of Defense, Bob Gates; General Michael Hayden, Director of the CIA; Bob Mueller, Director of the FBI; and other important figures to numerous to mention. Thank you for serving our country.

I appreciate the members of the intelligence community who have joined us. Part of the reason I have come is to honor this good man, and part of the reason I have come is to honor your good work. (Applause.) This nation owes you a debt of gratitude.

The Director of National Intelligence holds one of the most difficult and important positions in our government. In this time of war -- and we are a nation at war -- the President and his national security team must have the best intelligence about the plans and purpose of the enemy. And the job of the Director of National Intelligence is to ensure that we do. The Director of National Intelligence is the President's principal advisor on intelligence matters. He is also the leader of our entire intelligence community. He advises me about the national intelligence budget. He oversees the collection and analysis of intelligence information. He works to ensure that all of our intelligence agencies and offices work together as a single unified enterprise.

These are enormous challenges, and Mike McConnell has the experience and the character and the talent to meet them. He spent most of his adult life working in the intelligence world. He served as the executive assistant to the Director of Naval Intelligence, as the Chief of Naval Forces division at the National Security Agency, as Director of Intelligence for the Joint Chiefs of Staff during Operation Desert Storm, and as the Director for the National Security Agency. He's got a solid resume.

He also earned our nation's highest award for service in the intelligence field. He not only has got a good resume, he backed it up with good action. His work over a career spanning three decades is earning the admiration of his colleagues, the respect of the intelligence community, and a reputation in Washington for personal integrity and effective leadership. In short, you're going to like working with him, and so am I.

Mike's long experience gives him a unique understanding of the threats we face in this new century. He knows that the terrorists who struck America on September the 11th, 2001 are determined to strike our nation again. He understands that the enemy uses the tools of our modern economy -- from rapid transportation, to instant communications, to global finance -- to spread their extremist ideology, and facilitate new attacks.

He knows that his task as the Director of National Intelligence is to make certain that America stays ahead of this enemy and learns their intentions before they strike. He knows that we must stop them from harming our citizens; that the most important task of this government of ours is to protect the American people.

In his new position, Mike builds on the work of an outstanding leader of our intelligence community: Ambassador John Negroponte. The creation of the Director of National Intelligence was one of the most important reforms enacted in response to the attacks of September the 11th. John Negroponte was the first person to fill this new and essential position. He did so with talent and distinction.

During his time in office, John established the DNI as a core member of my national security team. He increased the unity of our intelligence community. He helped strengthen our national counterterrorism capabilities and improved information sharing between our intelligence and law enforcement communities.

John's vision and vigilance helped keep the American people safe from harm. I appreciate his leadership as America's first Director of National Intelligence, and I thank him for agreeing to continue to serve our country as Deputy Secretary of State.

Mike McConnell will expand on the vital reforms that John Negroponte set in motion. I've asked Mike to focus on several key areas. I've asked him to better integrate the intelligence community, making our different intelligence agencies and offices stronger, more collaborative, and better focused on the needs of their customers.

I've asked him to improve information sharing within the intelligence community and with officials at all levels of our government, so everyone responsible for the security of our communities has the intelligence they need to do their jobs. I've asked him to ensure that our intelligence agency focus on bringing in more Americans with language skills and cultural awareness necessary to meet the threats of this new century. I've asked him to restore agility and excellence to our acquisition community, and ensure that our nation invest in the right intelligence technologies. I've asked him to ensure that America has the dynamic intelligence collection and high-quality analysis that we need to protect our country and to win this war against these extremists and radicals.

As he carries out his new duties, Mike McConnell will be relying on the thousands of dedicated intelligence professionals who work day and night to keep us safe. They are America's first line of defense against the terrorists. And while many of their accomplishments must remain secret to our fellow citizens, those accomplishments are known to me. And they're doing good work. You're doing good work. And the American people owe you a strong debt of gratitude. I appreciate your willingness to take on the difficult and dangerous assignments. And you just need to know, you've got the full support of this government and the American people.

Our intelligence community is going to have an able leader in Mike McConnell. I want to thank Congress for swiftly confirming Mike to this vital position. I look forward to working with him as a key member of my national security team. I'm anxious to have him in that Oval Office every morning. (Laughter.) I hope he's anxious to show up. (Laughter.)

He'll find that I value the intelligence products that you create. He's going to find that the intelligence product is an important part of my strategic thought, and important part of helping me get this government to respond to do our most important duty, which is to protect you.

I look forward to working with Mike. I'm comfortable in knowing this is a good man who cares about one thing only, and that's his country. And I thank his family for supporting him as he returns to government service.

And now, I ask my Chief of Staff Josh Bolten to administer the oath of office. (Applause.)

(The oath is administered.) (Applause.)

DIRECTOR McCONNELL: Thank you. Thank you very much for that warm welcome. Mr. President, indeed, we thank you for being here this morning. We, your intelligence community, are honored by your presence.

I also want to thank Mr. Bolten for swearing me in. I'd like to take a moment to acknowledge Secretary of Defense Gates, my friend for more than 15 years, and a predecessor who held this position as the Director of Central Intelligence under another President Bush.

My esteemed colleagues, and of course, my family, thank you for being here.

Last month, I was honored by the President to be nominated to serve as the nation's second Director of National Intelligence. Today, that honor is matched only by the excitement I feel in taking on the work before us now, to further reform and integrate America's intelligence community for better collaboration as the President has charged.

I am most grateful for the hard work and the many accomplishments of Ambassador Negroponte. The President, the Secretary of Defense -- Secretary of State Rice, the State Department, and indeed, the nation are fortunate to have him serving as the Deputy Director of -- the Deputy Secretary of State, pardon me.

For a person who began a public service career 40 years ago this summer as an ensign serving in Vietnam, this is an opportunity and a privilege of a lifetime. Mr. President, I am humbled by your trust, and I'm most encouraged by your continued commitment to the transformation of the intelligence community, to not only serve you better, but to better serve our national leadership in the future.

It is your commitment and your resolve that excites our community of 16 intelligence organizations. After only a few days on the job, I can tell you, it is a commitment that is shared by the dedicated men and women who make intelligence service to the nation their chosen profession.

We take on this work of strengthening and reforming the intelligence community at a challenging time in our nation's history. Many of the developments that have made America so productive and prosperous -- the rise of globalization, rapid transportation, global connectivity, and ever advancing technology -- also have made us more vulnerable to threats such as terrorism.

Taking advantage of these advances in technology, today's threats move at increasing speeds. The time needed to develop a terrorist plot, communicated around the globe, and put it into motion has been drastically reduced. The time line is no longer a calendar, it is a watch.

While the threats have changed, our responsibilities endure. Mr. President, on behalf of the intelligence community, I accept the charge you have given us, and we will dedicate ourselves to making the needed changes for more effectiveness in serving you and in serving the nation. We will focus on our people, our policies, our collection, our technology, our analysis, and our operational results in a way that provides accountability to you, the Congress, and the American people.

To that end, we will revamp security and workforce policies of past. Our nation requires that we have the best and brightest of our citizens in our ranks to fight a very different enemy. The old policies have hampered some common sense reforms, such as hiring first and second generation Americans who possess native language skills, cultural insights, and a keen understanding of the threats we face.

To meet these threats at home, we need an intelligence community that effectively merges foreign and domestic intelligence, something that my generation was restricted from doing before the tragedy of 9/11. With the FBI's national security branch fully integrated into the intelligence community, we need to apply community-wide standards to human intelligence collection and dissemination, and work more effectively to share across organizational boundaries at the federal, state, local, and tribal level.

Of course, in this work, we will continue to conduct ourselves consistent with the Constitution, our nation's laws, to protect privacy and guarantee civil liberties of our citizens. In this area of technology, we need to recapture the acquisition excellence of the Cold War. In that era, drawing on bipartisan consensus for funding and for program stability, and using the Director of Central Intelligence's special authorities for acquisition, the community was able to move with agility and speed to create new technologies and new capabilities that were only imagined

earlier. We must create an acquisition environment in this community that will continue to make American intelligence the most effective in the world.

Finally, Mr. President, I want to say a few words about the people in this community, America's intelligence professionals. Tom Brokaw used the term "the Greatest Generation" when he wrote of Americans who served in World War II. That was a time when the country and our allies were fighting another ideology: fascism. Both of our fathers were members of that Greatest Generation, your father fighting in the Pacific, and mine fighting for four years in North Africa and in Europe. They both fought so that others may know freedom.

If Mr. Brokaw were writing another book today, he might call those who served and prevailed in the Cold War, "the Second Greatest Generation," working to help the free world defeat another ideology: communism.

I would like to salute the members of the intelligence community who have served in the long Cold War, lasting almost five decades. From human intelligence to creating new space-based technologies, the men and women of the intelligence community of that era served the nation in silence to provide the information our leadership needed to prevail. I would like to challenge our new generation of intelligence professionals to become "the Third Greatest Generation" in serving the nation to defeat today's threats to our freedoms and our way of life. I know that you're up to it. I would ask that we reflect on the service and sacrifices of those who went before, and to provide the information and service so vital to the nation's leadership.

Mr. President, you've given us a charge today to make the intelligence community more effective in protecting the nation. On behalf of the men and women who make up this community -- the Third Greatest Generation, if I may -- we pledge to do all in our power to make the nation safe.

Thank you, and God bless America. (Applause.)

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10:35 A.M. EST