



NEWS FROM
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Statement of Senator Daniel K. Akaka
"Government-wide Intelligence Community Management Reforms"
Committee on Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs
Subcommittee on Oversight of Government Management,
the Federal Workforce, and the District of Columbia

WASHINGTON, DC – U.S. Senator Daniel K. Akaka (D-HI), Chairman of the Subcommittee on Oversight of Government Management, the Federal Workforce, and the District of Columbia held an oversight hearing today to examine how to improve oversight of the intelligence community (IC) as the Director of National Intelligence prepares to implement significant government-wide management reforms.

Witnesses at today's hearing included the Honorable David M. Walker, Comptroller General, Government Accountability Office; Marvin C. Ott, Professor of National Security Policy, National War College, National Defense University; Steven Aftergood, Director, Government Secrecy Project, Federation of American Scientists; Frederick Kaiser, Specialist in American National Government, Government and Finance Division, Congressional Research Service; and Ronald A. Marks, Senior Vice President for Government Relations, Oxford Analytica, Inc.

The following is Senator Akaka's opening statement for the hearing:

Today's hearing — Government-wide Intelligence Community Management Reforms — will examine how to improve oversight of the intelligence community (IC) as it implements extensive government-wide management reforms.

Intelligence failures before the attacks of September 11, 2001, spurred the largest restructuring of the intelligence community since it was established. The Intelligence Reform and Terrorism Prevention Act of 2004 created a new position — the Director of National Intelligence (DNI) — to serve as the head of the intelligence community and principal advisor to the President on intelligence matters related to national security.

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Moreover, GAO has been a key advisor to Congress in its oversight of the development of new personnel systems at the Departments of Defense and Homeland Security. Given the fact that there are no union representatives to highlight employee concerns or implementation problems with the proposed personnel reforms in the IC, it is essential that Congress have an independent expert to review how such proposals are working.

Congress as well as the intelligence community could benefit from GAO's expertise on all of these topics, as well as its capacity to do crosscutting, government-wide evaluations and its institutional and political independence.

In September 2006, I introduced the Intelligence Community Audit Act, which I reintroduced in the 110th Congress (S. 82). This bill would reaffirm GAO's existing authority to perform audits and evaluations of IC financial transactions, programs, and activities, and to obtain the documents needed to do so. At the same time, the bill contains provisions to enhance the protection of classified information, including restricting GAO work and dissemination of GAO reports related to covert actions and intelligence sources and methods, and affirming that GAO staff would be subject to the same penalties for unauthorized disclosure of classified information as IC employees.

The intelligence community is proposing far-reaching transformational policies. It clearly could benefit from independent analysis and sufficient congressional oversight. But the response of the DNI to Congress is, in effect, "Trust us, we know what we are doing." Unfortunately, history provides numerous examples of intelligence failures that became evident only after it was too late to correct them. The stakes are too high to operate on trust.

Congress must redouble its efforts to ensure that U.S. intelligence activities are conducted efficiently, effectively, and with due respect for the civil rights and civil liberties of Americans. I will work to see that it does.

I look forward to hearing from our witnesses on their perspectives of how Congress can improve oversight of the intelligence community, in particular the role of the GAO. I want to thank our witnesses for being here today to discuss this important issue.

In particular, I want to thank David Walker for nearly a decade of service as the Comptroller General as he prepares to transition to become the President and Chief Executive Officer of the newly-established Peter G. Peterson Foundation. It has been my pleasure to work closely with him. I wish him well in his new endeavor, and I hope that his replacement will be someone who is equally capable and dedicated in his or her service.