

Statement for the Record
Opening Statement of John O. Brennan
Senate Select Committee on Intelligence
Nomination Hearing to be Director of the Central Intelligence
Agency
February 7, 2013

Chairman Feinstein, Vice Chairman Chambliss, Members of the Committee – I am honored to appear before you today as the President’s nominee to lead the Central Intelligence Agency. I am deeply grateful to President Obama for the confidence he has placed in me by sending my name forward to the Senate for consideration.

Senator Warner, thank you for your generous introduction, for your service to our Nation, and for your strong support of those who defend it. This includes the extraordinary men and women of the CIA and our Intelligence Community, so many of whom, like me, call Virginia home and call you our Senator.

I would not be here today without the love and support of my wife Kathy, who has been my life partner for more than 34 years and who, like the spouses of many other public servants and intelligence professionals, has made numerous sacrifices over the years, bearing the brunt of family responsibilities because of my chosen profession. Similarly, I would like to pay tribute to my three children, who, like the children of many CIA officers and other national security professionals, have had to deal with the disappointments associated with an absentee parent far more often than they should.

A heartfelt “thank you” also goes to my family in New Jersey, especially my 91-year-old mother Dorothy and my 92-year-old father Owen – who emigrated from Ireland nearly 65 years ago – and who, together, raised my sister, brother, and me to cherish the opportunity that is America.

As I appear before you today, I would additionally like to extend a special salute to David Petraeus, a patriot who remains – as do all former Directors – one of the staunchest advocates of the Agency’s mission and workforce.

I want to express my admiration for my close friend and colleague, Michael Morell, who has twice guided the CIA as Acting Director with a steady hand, integrity, and exceptional skill. If confirmed, it would be a distinct privilege for me to work side-by-side with Michael in the months and years ahead.

It also would be a tremendous privilege to serve with Director of National Intelligence Jim Clapper, who has mentored literally legions of intelligence professionals ever since his service in Vietnam. As the President’s principal intelligence advisor and head of the Intelligence Community, Jim is a person of longstanding and deep experience and integrity. He and I share identical views on the role of intelligence and on the importance of giving current and future generations of intelligence professionals the support they need and so richly deserve.

It would be the greatest honor of my professional life to lead the women and men of the Central Intelligence Agency – the Agency where I started my career nearly 33 years ago and where I served for a quarter century. A 24-year-old fresh out of graduate school, I arrived at Langley in August 1980 as a GS-9 “career trainee,” determined to do my part for national security as one of this Nation’s intelligence officers.

When I joined the CIA in August 1980, world events were unsettled. Our Embassy in Tehran had been overrun the year before, and 52 Americans were still being held hostage by a radical new government in Iran. The Soviet invasion of Afghanistan was less than a year old, and the next decade would witness the slow but steady crumbling of the Soviet Union. Nuclear proliferation and the spread of weapons of mass destruction were a constant concern, and U.S. officials were hard at

work around the globe trying to prevent regional tensions and animosities from turning into full-scale wars. And, ominously, the United States was about to face an upsurge in terrorist attacks that would claim hundreds of American lives in Lebanon, including a 49-year-old CIA officer named Bob Ames, who was killed during a brief visit to our Embassy in Beirut and who, at the time, was my boss at CIA.

During my 25-year career at CIA, I watched up close and even participated in history being made in far-off corners of the world, as CIA fulfilled its critical intelligence roles – collecting intelligence, uncovering secrets, identifying threats, partnering with foreign intelligence and security services, analyzing opaque and complicated developments abroad, carrying out covert action, and attempting to forecast events yet to happen – all in an effort to protect our people and strengthen America’s national security.

And throughout my career, I had the great fortune to experience firsthand as well as to witness what it means to be a CIA officer.

- Such as an analyst, who has the daunting task and tremendous responsibility to take incomplete and frequently contradictory information and advise the senior most policymakers of our government about foreign political, military, and economic developments.
- Or an operations officer, whose job it is to find and obtain those elusive secrets that provide advance warning of strategic surprise; political turbulence; terrorist plots; impending violence; cyber attacks; and persistent threats such as nuclear, chemical, and biological weapons proliferation.
- Or a technical expert, who seeks new and creative ways to find nuggets of intelligence in tremendous volumes of data, provide secure and even stealthy intelligence collection and

communications systems, and counter the latest technological threats to our Nation.

- Or a support officer or manager with the responsibility to ensure that the core missions of the Agency – collecting intelligence, providing all-source analysis, and, when directed by the President, conducting covert action – are carried out with the requisite skill, speed, agility, and proficiency.

From the Middle East to the central Caucuses, from sub-Saharan Africa to Central and South America, from the vast expanses of Asia to the great cities of Europe, and all countries and regions in between, CIA officers were there....sometimes in force and sometimes virtually standing alone.

And for those 25 years, it was a great honor for me to be an officer of the CIA, as I knew that the Agency's contributions to this country's security were as invaluable as they were innumerable.

Following my retirement from CIA in 2005, I had the good fortune to experience other professional opportunities. For three years, I served as President and Chief Executive Officer of a private sector company, where I learned firsthand some very important lessons about fiduciary responsibility and sound business practices. And for the past four years, I have had the privilege to serve as the President's principal policy advisor on homeland security and counterterrorism. In that role, I have had the opportunity to work daily with some of the finest Americans I have ever met – from the intelligence, military, homeland security, law enforcement, and diplomatic communities – who have dedicated their lives to the safety and security of their fellow Americans. It is because of the work of those Americans – serving domestically and especially in dangerous places abroad – that we are able to experience the freedom and security that are the hallmarks of our Nation.

I believe my CIA background and my other professional experiences have prepared me well for the challenge of leading the world's premier intelligence agency at this moment in history, which is as dynamic and consequential as any in recent decades, and will continue to be in the years ahead. Simply stated, the need for accurate intelligence and prescient analysis from CIA has never been greater than it is in 2013 – or than it will be in the coming years.

- Historic political, economic, and social transformations continue to sweep through the Middle East and North Africa, with major implications for our interests, Israel's security, our Arab partners, and the prospects for peace and stability throughout the region.
- We remain at war with al-Qa'ida and its associated forces, which – despite the substantial progress we have made against them – still seek to carry out deadly strikes against our homeland and our citizens, as well as against our friends.
- U.S. computer networks and databases are under daily cyber attack by nation states, international criminal organizations, subnational groups, and individual hackers.
- And regimes in Tehran and Pyongyang remain bent on pursuing nuclear weapons and intercontinental ballistic missile delivery systems rather than fulfilling their international obligations or even meeting the basic needs of their people.

Yes, the CIA's mission is as important to our Nation's security today as at any time in our Nation's history.

In carrying out their mission, the men and women of the CIA are frequently asked to undertake challenging, perilous, and controversial actions on behalf of the American people. The CIA is not immune from scrutiny of these efforts, and I welcome a discussion of CIA's past and

current activities. If I am confirmed, one of my highest priorities would be the Committee's lengthy report on the CIA's former rendition, detention, and interrogation program that involved now-banned interrogation techniques. I have read the findings and executive summary of the 6,000 page report, which raise a number of very serious issues. Given the gravity and importance of the subject, I would look forward to further dialogue with Members of the Committee on the report and its findings, if I am confirmed.

In addition, some of our government's current counterterrorism policies and operations have sparked widespread debate, domestically and internationally. I have publicly acknowledged that our fight against al-Qa'ida and associated forces has sometimes involved the use of lethal force outside the "hot battlefield" of Afghanistan. Accordingly, it is understandable that there is great interest in the legal basis as well as the thresholds, criteria, processes, procedures, approvals, and reviews of such actions. I have strongly promoted such public discussion, with the Congress and with the American people, as I believe that our system of government and our commitment to transparency demand nothing less.

As the elected representatives of the American people and as Members of the Committee, you have the obligation to oversee the activities of the CIA and other elements of the Intelligence Community to ensure that they are being carried out effectively, lawfully, successfully, and without regard to partisanship.

If confirmed, I would endeavor to keep this Committee fully and currently informed, not only because it is required by law, but because you can neither perform your oversight function nor support the mission of CIA if you are kept in the dark. And I know that irrespective of the fullness of that dialogue, there will be occasions when we disagree, just as you disagree among yourselves at times on aspects of past, current, and future activities of the CIA. Such disagreement is healthy and is a necessary part of our democratic process. But such disagreement should never prevent us from carrying out our national security and intelligence

responsibilities, as a failure to do so could have devastating consequences for the safety and security of all Americans.

During my courtesy calls with many of you, I also heard repeated reference to a “trust deficit” that has, at times, existed between this Committee and the CIA. If I am confirmed, a trust deficit between the Committee and the CIA would be wholly unacceptable to me, and I would make it my goal on Day One of my tenure – and every day thereafter – to strengthen the trust between us. I have a reputation for speaking my mind and, at times, doing so in a rather direct manner, which some attribute to my New Jersey roots. I like to think that my candor and bluntness will reassure you that you will get straight answers from me – maybe not always the ones you like, but you will get answers, and they will reflect my honest views. That’s the commitment I make to you.

I would like to finish by saying a few words about the importance of taking care of the women and men who serve in the CIA. Because of the secrecy that intelligence work requires, few Americans will ever know the extraordinary sacrifices that these professionals – and their families – make every day. Many of them risk their lives and, at times, have given their lives, to keep us safe.

If confirmed, I would make it my mission – in partnership with the Congress – to ensure that the men and women of the CIA have the training, tradecraft, linguistic skills, technical tools, guidance, supervision, and leadership they need to do their jobs. They also need assurance that we will do all we can to protect our Nation’s secrets and prevent leaks of classified information. These leaks damage our national security, sometimes gravely, putting these CIA employees at risk and making their missions more difficult. The men and women of the CIA are a national treasure, and I will consider it one of my most important responsibilities to take care of them, just as others took care of me when I first arrived at Langley as a young trainee in 1980.

Chairman, Vice Chairman, and Members of the Committee, as you well know, when you arrive at CIA Headquarters in Langley and enter the main lobby, you immediately see the marble Memorial Wall. On it are stars – each one representing a member of the CIA family who gave his or her life in service to our Nation. Today, there are 103 stars on that wall. To me, and everyone in the CIA, they are not simply stars, nor are they only visible remembrances of dearly departed colleagues and friends. The stars represent heroic and unsung patriots – Americans who lived their lives loving this country, and who died protecting it.

That Memorial Wall means something very special to me and to every other American who has proudly served at the Agency. I want all CIA employees always to be proud of the organization to which they belong and to be proud of all of its activities. And if given the honor to serve as the 21st Director of the CIA, I would take it as a sacred obligation to do everything in my ability to make sure the Central Intelligence Agency is the absolute best intelligence service it can be and one that makes all Americans proud.

Thank you very much, and I look forward to taking your questions.