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Director's Statement on the Release of the 9/11 IG Report Executive Summary

Statement to Employees by Director of the Central Intelligence Agency, General Michael V. Hayden on the Release of the 9/11 IG Report Executive Summary

August 21, 2007

Earlier this month, Congress passed a bill implementing some of the recommendations of the 9/11 Commission. The legislation, lengthy and complex, includes a provision dealing with the report that CIA's Office of Inspector General prepared on the performance of our agency prior to September 11th. The act gave me 30 days to make available to the public a version of the report's executive summary, declassified to the maximum extent possible. Today, well within deadline, I am releasing that material.

While meeting the dictates of the law, I want to make it clear that this declassification was neither my choice nor my preference. Two Directors of National Intelligence have supported the agency's position against release.

The long, grueling fight against terrorism, which depends in very real part on the quality of our intelligence, demands that we keep our focus on the present and the future. We must draw lessons from our past—and we have—without becoming captive to it. I thought the release of this report would distract officers serving their country on the frontlines of a global conflict. It will, at a minimum, consume time and attention revisiting ground that is already well plowed. I also remain deeply concerned about the chilling effect that may follow publication of the previously classified work, findings, and recommendations of the Office of Inspector General. The important work of that unit depends on candor and confidentiality.

In keeping with the letter and spirit of the law, CIA has in its declassification process removed relatively little from the report's executive summary. We focused chiefly on the protection of essential sources and methods. I also thought it unnecessary and unwise to permit identification of officers below the level of Center Chief, even if only by title, and those passages have been deleted, as well.

There is some background that I believe you need to know. In 2002, the Joint Inquiry Committee of Congress instructed our Office of Inspector General to determine if any agency officers should be rewarded for outstanding service in the run-up to 9/11 or held accountable for the unsatisfactory discharge of their duties. In June 2005, the Inspector General presented my predecessor, Porter

Goss, with a final report answering that specific mandate. The summary, like the complete report, is a very human document. In it, one group of agency officers—dedicated to their task—looks back to examine and judge the actions of another group of agency officers—dedicated to their task, the task of understanding and combating al-Qai'da.

You should also know that there are very different perspectives on this report. It was important for us to conduct our own review—that is something on which most, if not all of us, can agree. But our colleagues referred to in the document, and others who have read it, took strong exception to its focus, methodology, and conclusions. In October 2005, Director Goss declined to accept its primary recommendation—the creation of an Accountability Board to consider disciplinary action against a handful of individuals at different levels of command. I have re-read the report, carefully evaluated what it says, and have found no reason to revisit his decision.

Director Goss noted at the time that the officers cited include some of our finest. With inadequate resources, they and those they led worked flat out against a tough, secretive foe. As the executive summary points out, there was never a question of misconduct. While they, and our government as a whole, were unable despite their best efforts to shield our nation from attack, their skill, wisdom, energy, and leadership were key elements in the agency's victories over al-Qai'da before and after 9/11. They have made powerful contributions to our national security. They have prevented other acts of terrorism, and they have saved innocent lives, in our country and overseas.

This is *not* about avoiding responsibility. In fact, the opposite is true. CIA has for years spoken publicly, openly, and explicitly about shortcomings in its counter-terror programs before 9/11. Those shortcomings have been the subject of hearings, studies, panels, press reports, books, and critiques of all kinds, some fair, some not. As you will see, the Inspector General found no “silver bullet” that would have prevented the terror attacks of September 11th. There was, in the words of the summary, “no single point of failure.”

Nor did CIA wait for this formal review to begin identifying and correcting the systemic flaws discussed in the report. This is an organization that is self-aware, self-critical, and, to a great degree, self-improving. The Inspector General's report, like others before it, found areas in which CIA could do better, and, in the intervening years, we have worked hard to do just that.

Counter-terrorism is an exceptionally difficult challenge. The risks, and the stakes, are extremely high. The enemy is adaptive, resilient, and determined to strike us again here at home. There are limits to what intelligence can accomplish, and there can be no guarantee of perfect security. But the talented, motivated officers who work against this threat day and night give our nation a strong advantage. Together, we recognize that the finest tribute we can pay to the victims of terrorism is a redoubled effort to rip that scourge out by the roots. We can, and should, be proud of the many great things CIA has done, and will do, to defend the United States in a very dangerous world.

Mike Hayden

To access the declassified Executive Summary of the Office of Inspector General report, click here. [PDF Only 989KB*]

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